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THE KING'S YARD

A Story of Old Portsmouth

BY

WALTER JEFFERY

AUTHOR OF "A CENTURY OF OUR SEA STORY," ETC., ETC.

LONDON

R. A. EVERETT & CO., LTD.

42 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

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THE KING'S YARD

CHAPTER I

MRS. MILDWATER LETS HER ROOM

THE landlord of the "Help the Lamè Dog over the Stile, by George Powditch," leant against the doorpost of the little tavern, which in those days stood at the corner of Havant Street, on Portsmouth Common. The oil lamp on the counter and the four dips in the windows made quite a brave show of light, and the tavern was the only place of public entertainment anywhere near the Dockyard gate ; but, notwithstanding these attractions, the bar was empty. All the Dockyard men were gone home to their suppers, and the inn lay not in the way of chance customers.

Mr. Powditch, lost in thought, calculating the amount of his brewer's bill, suddenly pricked up his ears, for the sound of footsteps on the cobble stones told him that someone was walking fast along the

Portsmouth Road. Anyone coming this road so late must either have important business in the Yard, or else must be one of the officers living there; such persons were generally ready to gossip, and gossiping is dry work unless moistened with pots of ale.

Presently the owner of the footsteps, guided by the lights, steered a course straight for the inn, and stopped in front of its door.

"Good evening," said the landlord, making way for the stranger to enter, who took no notice of the movement, and only half turned towards Powditch as he answered :

"Good evening. Can you tell me where I can get a lodging hereabouts?"

"I can let you a bed."

"No doubt; but I want a room somewhere in a private house. Perhaps one or other of the Dockyard men would be glad of a respectable lodger."

Mr. Powditch looked at the man for a moment in some doubt as to his rank in life, for his dress and appearance were curiously contradictory. The stranger's long, snuff-coloured cloak of fine cloth, coming down almost to his ankles, was a garment such as the humbler classes seldom possessed. But then he carried no sword and wore a shocking bad hat. The soft black felt drooped over his eyes and half concealed his face, while a bundle hung over

his shoulder at the end of a stick. His plain stuff breeches and woollen stockings, when for a moment the cloak blew aside, and the landlord caught sight of them, his shoe buckles, big and shining in the tavern lights with the sheen of silver, were puzzling contradictions to Mr. Powditch, who replied with hesitation :

“Maybe—perhaps—if a body could pay, and belonged to the Service or the Yard—or was—”

“I can pay beforehand if required. Come, do you know of a small room?”

The landlord decided : a man with such an imperative manner must be answered.

“There is William Mildwater’s in Chapel Row, sir. They are poor, and the place is small, but he is a leading ropemaker, and they are respectable.”

“Where is Chapel Row? Where is Mildwater’s house? Is it near the Dockyard?”

“Straight ahead. Do you see that wall? That is the Dock wall. Follow it, turn to the left, you come to Chapel Row. Mildwater’s is the third house ; it faces the wall.”

“Thank you ; good-night.”

“Well,” said the landlord to himself, as the stranger walked off at a brisk rate, very unusual in customers of the *Lame Dog*, “he’s a rum ’un ; never so much as a pot, carries a bundle over his shoulder like a tramp,

and puts on the airs of a post captain. Who the devil is he?"

Queen Street, Prince George's Street, Chapel Row and Havant Street were at this period the principal streets on Portsmouth Common, still containing much unoccupied land, and not grown into enough importance to call itself the town of Portsea, though no longer a common, for the houses erected by the workmen belonging to the Yard had already made an important place of it.

Some seventy years before this time, in the reign of good Queen Anne, when Sir John Gibson was Governor of Portsmouth, the Dockyard men had asserted their right to build upon this ground, erecting for themselves houses upon the Common field so close to the line of fortifications as to mask the guns, and so Sir John Gibson ordered the artisans to stop their building.

"No, no," replied the Dockyard men to the Governor's demand, "we will build houses near to our work, and if need be, we will go to the extremest lengths to assert our right to do so."

Now Governor Gibson was not the man to stand talk of this sort—he was the Governor who, for punishment, rode soldiers upon a wooden horse in front of his own house in High Street, and who kept his prisoners in that horrible dungeon that a

generation ago could be seen at Portsmouth near St. James's Gate.

"Well," answered the Governor, "you go ahead and build houses, and I promise you that when you get 'em completed I'll turn the guns of the ramparts on 'em and blow 'em to pieces."

Fortunately, just about this time Queen Anne and Prince George came to Portsmouth to visit the Yard, and while at the Commissioner's house the shipwrights humbly petitioned Her Majesty to settle the dispute.

Governor Gibson was called upon to give his statement of the case, and the Queen, having heard him explain that it wouldn't do at all to have a lot of workmen living right under the guns of the fortifications, was on the point of declaring against the men, when Prince George spoke up for them in these words :

"Why, who so fitting to live close to their work as these shipwrights? They are good, loyal men. We owe to them those very ships riding in the harbour within sight—the *Royal William* and the *Royal Anne*—and I think we can settle this dispute if Her Majesty pleases."

So the matter was arranged, and, as related, the Common was half a century later fast growing into another town—that is, as fast as things went in those

times. The Jews were not far behind the Dockyard men in finding dwellings close to their work, and soon they began to run over from Portsmouth proper on to the Common. Soon little shops opened in all directions, in which sailors could spend their prize money in gold watches and such-like follies, and the older established tradespeople along the Hard before long found serious opponents in the rival dealers of the new town.

But all this is a digression, introduced that you may understand how the town ran over into the fortifications, so that strangers who came into it, until they learned the topography of the place, never knew whether they were inside or outside of the lines.

The Portsmouth Road, then, ran along by the Yard, and at one end of it was the Dockyard gate. A high wall separated the Common from the Yard, and under the shadows of it there still remain a few streets keeping the names they bore a century and a quarter ago, some of the houses in them yet standing, and as habitable as they then were. But for these features, all else is changed. What were then neat rows of houses, occupied by well-to-do officials of the Royal Dockyard, or married pursers, masters and men of similar ranks in the Service, are now lost in a maze of more pretentious thoroughfares,

and by comparison have become mean streets of an "ungenteel" part of the town.

Such a street as this was Chapel Row. The houses in it, as men living to-day can remember them, were much as they were a hundred years earlier. On its right side, as one walked from the direction of the Yard, a row of small houses; on its left side, the Dockyard wall. If one kept to the right and continued walking, he would reach the open country, and crossing unfrequented waste land, would arrive at the Halway houses on the London Road. If one followed the wall, he would come to the mud flats on the harbour shore, now altered out of recognition.

For a whole month Mrs. Mildwater, wife of William Mildwater, a leading ropemaker in the Yard, had been without a lodger. The Mildwaters were the owners of the little house, or rather, Mrs. Mildwater was the owner, for "her Mildwas," as she called him, owned nothing, not even his own soul, those who knew Mrs. Mildwater said.

The man in the long cloak, having groped his way through the dark street, presently knocked with the brass head on the brass knob of the green door of the little two-storey house, and all the neighbours along the Row ran to their front parlour windows to see and criticise their neighbour's visitor.

Mr. Mildwater was sitting in his kitchen, smoking

his long clay, his first pipe after the evening meal, and Mrs. Mildwater was washing up the dishes. She allowed her husband three pipes and one pot during the evening, and this indulgence kept him out of the Help the Lane Dog over the Stile, a sign which was at considerable variance with the reputation of the pot-house, for the unhelpful influence it exercised upon the jolly dogs who frequented it. It was early winter, and the Mildwaters, although they had no children, and were not so poor as their neighbours in consequence, would have had a better fire in the kitchen and a second farthing candle if the spare bedroom had been let.

Mr. Mildwater opened the door and looked inquiringly at the stranger.

"Are you William Mildwater?" asked the man.

"So I was baptised," replied the other, as if during his sixty years of life he had changed his name at frequent intervals, which he had not.

"I came down from yonder," said the stranger, indicating with his head some place which might be anywhere, "came down this evening, and went to the Lane Dog. I want a lodging; the landlord said you had one."

"Ah! considering that I don't run much of a score at the Lane Dog, I take it kindly that he should send you here. Wait till I get a light."

Mr. Mildwater went along the narrow passage to the kitchen.

"A lodger, missus," he said, "come along," and returning with the candle, invited the man to step inside to the best room. Not without hesitation, the master of the house ventured to point to one of the rush-bottomed chairs—the one with the coloured rushes only kept for company.

"The missus will talk to you, friend; she knows what she wants, and this is her," he said.

Mrs. Mildwater looked at the prospective lodger, who had not accepted the seat, but stood erect, his bundle resting on the sacred chair, his hat upon the bundle, his long cloak thrown open.

He was not a pleasant fellow to look upon, for though tall and broad-shouldered, carrying his body like a soldier, as the Mildwaters, brought up in a garrison town, quickly saw and noted, yet he looked them not in the face frankly as an honest man should, and he hung his head as if he were ashamed of the scar upon his yellow cheek, rather than as one who had been wounded in the service of his country. No soldier wore his hair cropped close to his head, unpowdered and unwigged, as this man did, nor did common soldiers speak English in the way this man spoke it (neither with the broad accent of the north, nor the familiar south and west country twang), but

he clipped his words, opening his mouth just long enough to fire them out, and closing it again with a snap that irritated Mrs. Mildwater. His yellow skin, his black hair and beetling eyebrows, and the scowl upon his face, made more repulsive by the scar, gave the woman an uncomfortable feeling as to his honesty, and puzzled her husband, who, still holding the candle with great steadiness lest a spot of grease should fall upon the white scrubbed floor and upset his peace for a week, looked anxiously at his wife to see what she could make of the stranger.

Mrs. Mildwater, speaking slowly and solemnly, and eyeing the would-be lodger severely, said :

"I have a room to let, ten shillings a week and all found. But you ain't a matey."

"No, I'm not a matey, but my father was. He belonged to the ropemakers' guild, and once worked in the Yard. Then he went to America, where I was brought up. Perhaps your husband might have heard of my people. Hill was the name."

"Afore my time, I believe," remarked Mr. Mildwater.

"Yes ; my relations have been dead many years—they died in the colonies."

"Ah ! That's it, is it ?" said Mrs. Mildwater, "and what might you be now ? Mildwater is in the Yard. He is a leading ropemaker, and my room has always

been let to a Dockyard matey. I never took strangers afore."

"I am a painter by trade, and have been working at different places in America, till the troubles began. Then I made my way home, thinking I might get something to do here."

It was plain that Mrs. Mildwater did not like the look of this wandering stranger, and she did not hesitate to speak her mind to him.

"Rolling stones gather no moss," she said. "We are very poor folks, and we let our room for the sake of the bit money it brings."

"Oh, I have money," answered the other. "Though I've been a rolling stone, I have saved a bit on the plantations, and you can have your week's rent beforehand."

"You must have someone still alive in the town who could vouch for you?" suggested Mrs. Mildwater, still curious and doubtful.

"No, we were only a small family, and they are all dead or gone away. You don't seem to want me for a lodger. If because I'm a stranger you don't care to have me, say so, and I'll go elsewhere."

"I don't see that it is anything against the young man because he is out of work, and is looking for a job, so long as he pays his rent," said Mr. Mildwater.

"Very well, Mildwas, you always would have your

own way, and so I suppose I must take him in. Have you got anything beside the bundle, young man?"

"Yes, ma'am, but first I'll pay you my rent for a week. Then I'll step out for half an hour, and you can talk it over with your husband."

Accordingly Mr. Hill paid down ten shillings and left the house. Mrs. Mildwater, from the moment her lodger's back was turned until he came in at bedtime, spent the interval soundly rating her Mildwas for being so ready to take in a young man from America, where the people were all rebels and savage Indians.

CHAPTER II

HOW AN AMERICAN WAS WELCOMED TO PORTSMOUTH

THE old town, after a long spell of dull times, was waking up again, for the American rebellion had grown into a war, and even the townsfolk saw plainly that the peace with France could not last much longer, and were cheerful at the prospect. The war to them meant plenty of work in the Yard, and fleets of ships off the Motherbank or in Portsmouth Harbour, and it was by these things that the people grew prosperous.

The harbour was already alive with the bustle of preparation. Ships that had been lying up in ordinary since the last war, were being rapidly got ready for sea, and at Spithead a squadron was embarking stores for Lord Howe's fleet, then off the American coast. Lighters from the Dockyard, bumboats and watermen's wherries were continually going to and from the ships, and able-bodied young men with little to do but idle their time away in the pot-houses, did their idlings in inns on country roads,

where press-gangs were not likely to fall in with them.

During the peace fewer than a thousand men were employed in the Yard, but at this time, from Southampton, from Bristol, and like places, men were flocking into Portsmouth, and were being taken on every day at the Commissioner's office. Yet, notwithstanding these signs of what was coming, French coasting vessels crossed the Channel just as regularly for Portsmouth, and so there was nothing strange in the coming into port of a little Havre lugger loaded with onions. This vessel at ten o'clock one morning ran round the Point into the small branch of the harbour, where merchant ships lie, then presently, by the aid of a light leading wind, and with much shouting and caper-cutting on the part of her crew of two men and a boy, got herself made fast to the Town Quay.

But there was something unusual in His Majesty's cutter *Ferret*, tender to the Port Admiral, which had been following the lugger from the moment that she rounded Gilkicker, running into this part of the harbour, and without any noise or cutting of capers, dropping the lieutenant who commanded her and a couple of marines upon the quay, just as the Frenchmen were recovering from the excitement of making fast their lines.

Then this is what happened: The lieutenant walked along the wharf till he came to the French vessel, the two marines following a little way in the rear. The officer stepped on board, the people on the wharf closing up to see what was going on, until the marines pushed them away and took up a position on either side of the little vessel's gangway.

On the deck of the Frenchman was a passenger. There was no doubt he was a passenger, for his dress was that of a gentleman, and he wore a sword and looped hat, and lace frills and all sorts of fal-lals. And was tall and upright and handsome and refined in appearance, being altogether in striking contrast to the French sailors in their striped petticoats, stocking caps, wooden shoes, and tarry pigtails.

At sight of him the English lieutenant said: "Ah! and here we are."

The young man—for he was not more than thirty—had a pair of fine brown eyes, and they looked at the lieutenant, and over the lieutenant's shoulders at the two marines. Then the passenger's pale cheeks reddened just a little, and his lips twitched very slightly, the clean-shaved regular features showing the movement quite plainly to the lieutenant, who smiled and made a conciliatory gesture as he noticed the white hand of the stranger slip half unconsciously round to his sword hilt, as one who is making ready.

"You are the man I want," said the lieutenant.

"And for what, sir, do you want me?" asked the passenger.

"You are a passenger by this vessel just arrived from Havre, and you are an American."

"Yes ; what then ? "

"Why, then," and the English officer turned towards the marines and made a signal with his hand—"why, then, you are my prisoner."

"And why ? "

"I arrest you, sir, as a deserter."

"What ! "

The American stepped back, and this time half drew his sword.

The master of the vessel, a dapper little Frenchman, who had been often enough across the Channel to understand English, and with the crowd had been an excited listener to what was going on, here broke in:

"But, monsieur, there is some mistake ; our nations are not at war. My passenger has zee passport of zee king."

The interruption gave the passenger time to recover himself, and he said quietly :

"Yes, sir, you are certainly mistaken. I have a passport, and—"

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Will you be so good as to produce the passport ? "

The lieutenant smiled. "Here it is; can you read French?"

"I was chosen for this service on that account," he answered.

And taking the document, in proof of his assertion read it aloud, translating as he read :

"'Exhibited at the Office of Marine at Havre.

"'By the King.

"'To all Governors and our lieutenant-generals of our provinces and armies, governors particular and commanders of our towns, places and troops, and to all other of our officers, justiciary and subjects to whom it shall belong Health :—

"'We will and command you very expressly to let pass safely and freely Mr. Henry Warner, going to England, without giving him or suffering him to have any hindrance, but on the contrary, every aid and assistance that he shall want or have occasion for. This present passport to be valid for one month only is our pleasure.

"'Given at Fontainebleau the first day of
Oct., 1776. LOUIS.

"'By the King De Vergenes.'"

"Well," said the American.

"Well," said the lieutenant.

"Are you satisfied of your mistake?"

"You must discuss that later on with my superiors. Meanwhile, sir, I must trouble you to come with me."

"But, monsieur, I beg—" began the master of the vessel.

"Oh! go to the devil," interrupted the lieutenant. "Now, sir, if you please. Marines, take charge of this gentleman."

"Oh! Of course, if it pleases monsieur, but—"

"It does please monsieur; there is no mistake. My Government will answer yours later on if you don't like it. One of you men get any baggage belonging to the prisoner, and bring it along with you."

"The Frenchman is quite right in protesting against such an outrage, sir, and you will have cause to regret this arrest of my person, for although an American by birth, my passport ought to show you that I am under the protection of the King of France, and you know very well I am not a deserter from your service."

"All this you can say to my superiors, but meanwhile you must come with me."

The American preserved his temper with the greatest difficulty, but he replied with dignity:

"Look you, sir, I cannot resist force of this kind, but I warn you that the French Minister will make some of you pay for this insult. I am under the

protection of France, and the very manner of your treatment convinces me that you are acting a part. This charge of desertion is a mere trick."

The Englishman pointed to the gangway.

"My dear sir," he said, "we will not argue this matter now. I have my duty to do, and if I have acted civilly to you, don't throw my civility in my teeth, for, by the Lord Harry, if you don't like the gentlemanly way I have managed the affair, you shall presently have a taste of my other quality."

"Very well, sir, your threat is unnecessary. I am compelled to go with you, but I warn you again someone will pay for this insult."

"Marines, right about face; march!" was the lieutenant's reply; and then through a gaping crowd of watermen and sailors, the American walking between the two redcoats, followed by the lieutenant, went off along the quay to the cutter.

As soon as the party got on board, a sharp order was given, the main-sail and jib were hoisted, and the *Ferret* stood away up the harbour. As they ran past the Dockyard, the American leaned moodily over the side of the vessel; but the lieutenant, apparently willing to make up for his brusqueness, presently tapped him on the shoulder. The American stepped back, not liking the familiarity.

"Pardon me," said the officer, "but being a sort

of countryman of mine, I wanted to be civil to you. Don't worry over this affair."

"I don't worry over it, sir, but it is an infamous thing to believe that I am a deserter."

"I don't believe it."

"Then what do you mean by calling me one? You saw my passport."

"That's just it," said the other, with a laugh. "I had a description of your vessel and of your person, and I knew of the passport, but I wanted to see it. I knew if I accused you of being a deserter that you would lug it out at once."

"Then why have you taken me?"

"Ah! that's beyond me; but I was to make sure of you by the passport—and I have."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To Portchester; but you'll know all about it presently. Meanwhile, what do you think of the harbour? Look at the ships fitting out to bring the colonists to their senses."

The American laughed. "Do you think that interests me?"

"I *know* that interests you. Perhaps it may occur to you that your arrest, and the fleet, and the Dock-yard, and the doings in France are not altogether unconnected, eh?"

"As you said just now, sir, that is a matter for

your superiors ; but I begin to see daylight from these hints."

"Well, never mind, we'll drop the subject. See that old line-of-battleship, that's the *Monarque*, lying in the same place where she was moored ten years ago, when Byng was shot upon her quarter-deck. Beyond her is the *Britannia*, that vessel sending up her top-masts, and beyond her again is the *Royal George*, the loftiest and squarest ship in the Service. Those hulks lying off the opposite shore are nearly all prizes taken in the last war. I fancy if you remain long enough with us you'll presently see a few more new ones."

And so, as the *Ferret* passed between the lines of ships, her commander entertained his prisoner with descriptions of them, until presently they came to the arm called Portchester Lake, where the cutter was brought up. Then her dinghy was launched, and the lieutenant, the two marines and the prisoner got into the boat, which, rowed by a couple of sailors, soon neared the old castle at the head of the harbour.

"Is this tumbledown old place the headquarters of your Governor or Port Admiral, or whoever rules this part of England?" asked the American.

"No, sir, but my orders are to land you there, and then we will explain further."

"This—if it were not such an old ruin—looks very much as if King George had made a State prisoner of me, and was about to lodge me in the bottom dungeon of the Tower of London, or some such musty hole."

"Oh, you'll be safe enough here, never fear. But I'll be hanged if I know why they have chosen this place, unless because it's so far away from London."

"I feel mighty curious about the matter, and not altogether pleased at the situation, I assure you ; but here we are at the beach."

"Way enough !" cried the lieutenant to his men, and the little boat ran up alongside a rough wooden landing-place.

Then the naval officer jumped out of the boat, and a sentry on the pier saluted him. The two marines fell in on either side of the American, and the lieutenant led the way to the sea gate of the castle.

CHAPTER III

AT PORTCHESTER

PORTCHESTER CASTLE which in our later French wars was to become famous as a prison, was in this year, 1776, a place of little importance. In the last war the castle had been used as a war prison, and people still told how, in '66, one Valerie Coffre, a young French officer, had stabbed a fellow-prisoner in its grounds. There had been a good deal of quarrelling among the foreigners, and the authorities, by way of giving them a lesson, marched all the Portchester prisoners to Winchester, to witness the execution of Coffre. Many similar stories are still told of the prisoners during the Buonaparte war, when some five thousand Frenchmen were quartered within the walls, and to find room for them the authorities built rows of rough wooden huts. A few such disfigurements there was at this period, remnants of prisoners' quarters in the last war, and these buildings, besides the castle's venerable towers and

ivy-covered walls, made a hideous blot upon its meadow-like grounds.

Everyone ought to know that Portchester was once the principal station of the Roman navy in Britain, and an old author relates that the place was of great importance very long before the Romans landed. However that may be, it is certain that the ancient Britons had a fortress there, and Roman, Saxon, Norman styles of building are all yet discernible in the castle's towers.

The castle is on a point of land upon the northern shore of Portsmouth Harbour ; it stands in a square of about nine acres of land, of which the fortress proper occupies nearly an acre in the north-west corner. The walls are from eight to twelve feet thick, and about eighteen high, having in many places a passage round them, covered by a parapet. In all there are eighteen towers of various shapes and dimensions, and moats surround the walls. The main entrance to the castle on the west side is thirty feet deep and fourteen wide, under a square tower, and there are likewise two sally ports.

At this time there was no Frenchman in the castle, and it was in fact doing duty as a kind of hulk, for the floating hulks were all crowded with convicts, who, thanks to the Revolution, had escaped a passage to the American plantations. In such wooden buildings,

erected for the Frenchmen, as were still habitable were quartered the pressed men, and marines and sailors sentenced for slight offences, who could not be accommodated on the receiving ships and floating hulks in the harbour. The preparations for war had brought a hot press in the neighbourhood, and men taken by force to serve the King had to be kept under lock and key until drafted off to sea-going vessels. A hundred of these prisoners roamed at will in an enclosed part of the grounds, and a guard of some five-and-twenty militia veterans served to keep them inside the walls.

In this year, then, when the *Ferret* came in from a cruise, it was nothing uncommon for her to sail right up the harbour to the mouth of Portchester Creek. Then there would be disembarked on the mud flats outside the castle walls, a wretched crowd of men belonging to every class of the poorer sort, who had been pressed at places on the coast anywhere between the ports of London and Southampton. But for her to make such a trip as this, carrying one prisoner, evidently a man of some importance, was the cause of considerable wonderment to the little garrison at the castle.

The Governor at this time was Captain Bagshott, a naval officer on half-pay, nearly seventy years of age, fifty of whose years had been spent doing those

deeds that made it no idle boast for Englishmen to sing "Britannia Rules the Waves." The captain was a poor man, without a friend at Court, grievously wounded, and a widower with a young daughter—this is how the end of the war left him, and it never occurred to Bagshott for one moment, even when the situation puzzled him most, that there was any human remedy for his troubles, or that his country owed him anything but such prize money and pay as in his last commission had become his due. But the Port Admiral had by chance come across him in the new hospital at Haslar, and the great man remembered that Bagshott had once saved his life, and so, very much to the old fellow's astonishment, he found himself appointed Governor of Portchester.

Captain Bagshott lived within the castle in a little modern cottage erected close to the church, which stands upon the site of the Sacellum, towards the eastern side of the grounds. This cottage was the Governor's official quarters, and the place was so deftly hidden by thick trees and clinging ivy that it in no wise seemed obtrusive.

When the sentry saw the arrival of the *Ferret's* boat, and passed the word along, an orderly appeared at the garden gate of the Governor's house, and solemnly reported: "Boat coming alongside, sir."

This was a regulation laid down by Captain

Bagshott. When strangers came by road, then the soldier officer in charge of the veterans might announce arrivals in his way. But the approach of a person who came by water must be notified to the Governor in such proper manner as this, and the old man would suffer no pipe-clay words of command or landlubber methods of reception when boats from the fleet or naval officers visited his command.

The Governor was seated in his porch, inhaling, to keep himself fresh, as he said, the keen salt wind, which, tempered by the ooze of the harbour, blew briskly on this October morning over the castle walls, though their height shut out the sea view.

"Dolly, Dolly, my girl, bring me my coat!" cried the captain. "Ah, is that you, Stockleigh?" (this to the lieutenant of the garrison, a subaltern of nearly thirty years' service); "go you and meet the party, and escort 'em here."

Then came Dolly with the coat, holding it for her father to struggle into.

"Thank you, my dear. How's that, am I all square? And have you brushed it thoroughly?"

"Of course I have," said the girl, as she smoothed down the collar of the coat and kissed him as the old man stooped to wriggle into it, "and you are all square, sir, but so woefully shabby. Do buy a new coat; the lace is quite green."

"No, no, my dear, the coat's smart enough for an old fellow, and as to the lace, why, there's no prize money nowadays, and it's quite good enough for a gaoler. Be off to your cookery, and don't come near me again till this business is all settled."

She was pretty, the simple beauty of an English country girl, with a graceful figure and easy carriage, that notwithstanding her big cooking apron and plain dress and healthy glow of colour, made it plain to anyone that she was the little lady of the castle. When she went back to the kitchen and ordered the serving woman to bring her this, that, and the other for the making of the pie for dinner, despite her eighteen years and plain dress, it seemed fitting that she should have command.

Presently appeared Lieutenant Stockleigh, leading a procession of the naval officer, his prisoner and the two marines, one of them carrying a valise belonging to the American. Captain Bagshott bowed, then led them into the front room of his cottage, which was at once his state apartment and his daughter's best parlour.

"Here, sir," said the naval lieutenant, "is the prisoner whose arrival the Admiral says you expected. I will take a receipt for his body, and get away, if you please."

"Gentlemen, be seated. You may order your marines back to their boat, sir."

‘Is it usual to invite deserters to be seated, for according to this officer I am arrested as a deserter?’ asked the American tartly, and taking no notice of the offered chair.

The Governor frowned, as he answered :

“No, sir, it is not ; and you can make very sure that you shall have no further cause to complain of being treated with too much civility.”

“I beg your pardon, but it is irritating to be accused of such a crime.”

“No doubt, no doubt, sir, but you must excuse me ; this officer is waiting for my formal receipt.”

The American looked curiously about him while Bagshott was fumbling with the writing materials to fill in the official documents, then before the old man began to write, he said :

“This seems to be a *lettre de cachet* kind of proceeding. One might fancy oneself in the Bastille, but your castle is a little out of repair. I am anxious to know, sir, if you will give me the explanation I have been refused by this gentleman ?”

“Presently, sir, presently I will make all clear to you,” the Governor replied. “We have no Frenchified methods of proceeding in this country, and you will find yourself rather a—a—a—guest in some sort than a prisoner.”

"But why? What in the name of all that's wonderful do you—"

"Patience for a moment, sir, if you please. The lieutenant is anxious to get back to his boat."

Captain Bagshott then handed over his receipt, the naval officer wished his late prisoner a cordial good-bye, which was gracefully returned, and Lieutenant Stockleigh and the sailor walked off, leaving the American alone with the old Governor, who assumed his best quarter-deck manner, and said :

"Now, sir, if you will allow me, I will explain the situation to you as far as my instructions permit me to do so. The authorities here are better informed than you suppose, and they, having certain information regarding the proceedings of the American rebels in France, gave instructions to arrest you on your arrival in this port. My orders are that you are to be treated with every consideration consistent with your safe keeping. You are not to be confined with the rabble we have here, but are to have a separate apartment and the liberty of the castle grounds in charge of a guard, but you are not to be allowed to communicate with anyone."

"But what the devil do they really charge me with? and by what infamous rascally trickery do they pretend that I am a deserter? You must know that I am not one."

"Don't attach importance to the charge of desertion, sir. It is very natural that such an accusation should annoy you, but I suspect it was merely a trick of the lieutenant's to hide the true reason for your detention."

"Well, what, in Heaven's name, is the true reason?"

"That, sir, is best known to yourself—I don't know—but," and the old man's voice softened, "I am instructed that you were a person of distinction in the colonies before the rebellion broke out, but now I am afraid (I tell you frankly this much) that you are classed as a rebel. You are a young man, and I think, a gentleman, so just hand me your sword as a matter of form, and I daresay we shall manage to get along comfortably together." Then catching sight of Stockleigh through the parlour window, he called him, and formally introduced them. "Mr. Warner, I am informed, sir."

"Yes, Captain Henry Warner. I was an officer in the Philadelphia Militia, and have fought on your side before the quarrel," replied the American.

"Well, Mr. Warner, I am glad to hear it. Stockleigh and myself will do what we can for you, consistent with our duty to the King."

The old man said the words "duty" and "King" in a "put that in your pipe and smoke it" tone of

voice that brought a merry twinkle in the brown eyes of the rebel.

"I thank you, sir," he replied. "Perhaps the example of two such loyal veterans will not be lost upon me. Meanwhile, where do you propose to quarter me? You must have some underground dungeon, I imagine, for a regiment wouldn't keep a dangerous fellow like myself inside of this tumble-down place if you lodge me above the ground."

"Never fear, sir, never fear. Stockleigh and myself have thought of a secure enough place for you, but it is not so bad as quarters below water-mark."

Then the three men, Captain Bagshott leading the way, walked out across the grounds towards the old castle keep, and Dolly, who had been an interested, but concealed listener through the half-open kitchen door, went back to her pie-making.

The girl, like the good housewife that she was—the piano curse had not then come upon the land—knew how to make a pie, yet instead of her usual light and quick handling of the rolling-pin, now she rolled her paste in a heavy, half-hearted way, ruinous to the making of good crust, and very trying to the patience of her kitchen-maid, an elderly spinster of much experience. Then, as she turned the dough about upon the board, a big tear trickled down her cheek into the pastry, and got amalgamated with the

pie crust. And the maid, watching her sympathetically, rubbed her eyes with the corner of her apron and said :

“ Oh, such a fine young handsome fellow, none of your low sailors or marines, an American, too. A State prisoner, they say ; he may be shot by-and-by. Fancy his poor mother's feelings ! I wonder if he has got a sweetheart ? ”

This speech set Dolly thinking as she watched the poor prisoner marched off to his quarters, and she greatly pitied him, his mother, and his sweetheart—if he had one.

CHAPTER IV

MR. HILL IS INTRODUCED TO THE KING'S DOCKYARD

MRS. MILDWATER'S lodger on the evening of his arrival went out for half an hour, and spent the time at the Help the Lamè Dog, where he treated the landlord to a pot of ale, and held some talk with him. But, as Mr. Powditch said afterwards, he was not a sociable kind of man, and he seemed to have something on his mind. He drank his ale, too, in a way that the landlord did not like, making one pot last him much longer than an honest man should, having nothing to say the while of himself and his business, and putting so many questions about the town and the townsfolk that Mr. Powditch was heartily glad to be rid of him.

As he was leaving the tavern, Hill mentioned that he thought a stranger would be asking for him in a day or two, and when this person came, would Mr. Powditch be good enough to direct the man to the Mildwater's?

"Yes ; I'll send the gentleman there to the name of John Hill, as you said. Was you expecting to get work at the Yard?"

"Yes, yes, I think so; and the man whom I am expecting will, I hope, help me to a job."

Then John Hill walked off to Chapel Row, and took up his quarters in the little room at the Mildwater's. These good people in the course of a few days got over their prejudices against the lodger, whose only apparent fault was the silent trait in his character, and even in this respect, before a week was past, there was much improvement.

Hill told them plainly that he had come from Dover, where he had been employed as a painter, having landed there a few months before from a ship in which he had worked his passage from Virginia. Painting was his trade, and he hoped that, owing to the war, he would be able to get taken on in the Yard, or if not, then perhaps in time, when better known men than himself had got employment under Government, he might fill some vacancy outside the Dock walls or obtain odd jobs.

They noticed that he seemed educated above his station, and he hinted that in America he had been brought up for better things, but bad times had driven him to seek this kind of work. So, though at first they had thought he was too far above them to

be anything but Mr. Hill, Mrs. Mildwater was not the woman to stand on ceremony, and as the lodger unbent, and seemed anxious to be friendly with our Mildwas, she took to calling him John, and from that to Jack. Then, anxious that he should obtain work, and so remain with them, she went about telling the neighbours that if they heard of anything in the painter way, they might bear in mind that John Hill, painter, lodged with her. So that everyone in Chapel Row soon drifted into calling him Jack the Painter.

Jack got occasional work now and again, but although once or twice he visited the Dockyard in company with Mildwater, he seemed to lack energy enough to worry for work from the foreman painter, to whom Mildwater had introduced him. But he liked to visit the Yard, showing some interest in the sights, and Mildwater was pleased to exhibit all its wonders, and there was much to see, for even in those days it was quite a little town, though unlike enough to its present-day appearance.

The town of Portsmouth, too, was not without interest for him, and he was greatly taken with the ramparts, and the manner in which the place was surrounded by them. So enclosed was it, as he said to Mildwater, that supposing a man wished to escape the press, now beginning to grow hot, and they shut

all the town gates, there was but a sorry chance for any poor devil who wanted to run from serving the King.

It is true the sea fortifications were not of the strongest, considering that the Yard at this time contained, with the adjacent gun wharf, naval and military stores to the value of more than a couple of million pounds. On the sea side this great naval arsenal was chiefly defended by Southsea Castle, then garrisoned by an old sergeant and three or four veterans, who drove a thriving trade with the townsfolk by selling them cakes and ale when on holidays they made up picnics on Southsea beach. On the opposite side of the harbour there was the Blockhouse, but four or five invalids formed the garrison there, and they spent most of their time in much the same fashion as their comrades at Southsea. But then, as Mr. Mildwater said, Portsmouth was waking up now, and the lines of fortifications were very strong should an enemy attempt the place by land, and as to an attack by sea—why, the fleet would provide for that, and besides, new guns and a detachment of artillery were presently to be sent to the town.

In those days, Englishmen had nothing to hide, and were far too brave to trouble themselves as to whether or not foreigners came prying about their dockyards or arsenals, watching how our shipwrights

built ships, and copying our plans. What need we care? Foreigners could not build ships, and even if they could, we should certainly sooner or later go to war and make prizes of the other nation's vessels.

And so, because we were indifferent as to who came into the Dockyard, when you entered at the gate just beyond the Ordnance wharf at the end of the Yard, there was just a porter's lodge instead of a police office.

The porter who sat in the lodge, provided the person did not look like a thief, or was not well known to him as one of the town rogues, would not dream of stopping anyone from walking in—that is, of course, during working hours, for at night there were sentries from the garrison posted all round the Dock wall. The master porter, in those days, was a person of importance, and when, as sometimes was the case, he held the tap as well, he made something like £800 a year out of it, employing, you may be sure, many subordinate porters, who did all the opening and shutting of gates.

When you entered the Yard, and got fairly inside the gate, there, in front of you, were the mast-houses and ponds, while on the right were neat rows of red brick dwellings, where lived the master builder, the clerk of the cheque, the clerk of the survey, the master attendants, the master rigger, the master

shipwright, the master ropemaker, the master sailmaker, and all the rest of them. Then there were the fine new buildings of the Royal Academy, and that great man's house with the lawn in front, the residence of Mr. Commissioner Gambier (whose acquaintance Mr. Hill made later on at an eventful period of his life). Away to the left were the building slips and docks, and beyond them the waters of the harbour, where lay, dismasted hulks, whole rows of prizes taken in the late French war, and beyond them again the Gosport shore.

Mildwater showed his lodger all these things, but Hill at his first visit seemed not much interested. Even Anchor Row, with the blacksmiths' shops, where they forged great thirty hundredweight anchors, and blew the fires of the blacksmiths with a marvellous pair of bellows, so big that the apparatus was worked by a windlass, which was driven by a man, who, slung by the armpits, trod a tread-mill, which in its turn revolved the windlass, even such a wonderment as this did not greatly excite the painter. But the hemp and rope houses caught his attention, and our Mildwas, who had begun to experience that keen disappointment which comes to those who exhibit the lions of a town to unsympathetic visitors, was amply repaid for showing Hill the place by the painter's enthusiasm over the marvels of rope-making.

The long, low buildings stretched east and west across the Yard from the great wall on the town side to the water's edge, almost on the other. More than a thousand feet they ran, the rope walks looking, from a bird's-eye view of the Yard, like a parallel ruler laid upon it, and beside them, running half their length, was the hemp house. All over the Yard the clang of the anchor forgers in the blacksmiths' shops, and the dull strokes of the shipwrights' mallets at the building slips, drowned all noises, except when you came to the rope walks. Then the clatter of the whirls or spinning wheels shut out every other sound, and when a stranger entered the building a gun might have been fired alongside of him, and the chances are he would not have heard it.

On the ground floor of the rope walk, when the painter first saw it, they were twisting a cable for a seventy-four gun ship, and it took eighty men to work the job, while on the floor above, groups of men were spinning light ratline stuff, one man in each group turning the wheel, and a couple of men walking to and fro the twisting line, tending the strands as they revolved with the whirls, each rope and line having for its heart the white thread that marked it as the King's.

"Truly this is a wonderful place," said the painter ;
"there be many men working here, Mr. Mildwater.

I should be well pleased to get a job at this, for painting is not to my taste."

Mildwater laughed:

"A job here! Why, John Hill, men must serve their time to this trade as apprentices, then as journeymen, and then, if they become good workers, they are admitted to the guild. Now, I'll be bound that you don't know even the difference betwixt a cable laid and a shroud laid rope."

"Indeed, I do not."

"Well," said Mr. Mildwater impressively, "your schoolen's been neglected, and in this building you will learn what every boy ought to know afore he's set adrift on the world. First they send us over from the hemp house, all ready for making up into strands, the hemp yarn, then we spin the strands into rope. Three strands laid up together make a hawser laid rope, and three hawsers laid together make a cable. But with a shroud laid rope you twist four strands round a core."

"How very interesting!" said the painter, yawning at the description, though he watched with keen attention a pot of hot tar, and wondered at the careless manner the men attending it handled the stuff. But Mr. Mildwater, intent upon his subject, took no heed of the other, and went on with his lesson.

"You must remember, too, that in the hemp house they twist up the hemp right-handed, then we twist the yarns into strands left-handed, then three strands to the right, and you have a hawser, and three hawsers to the left and you have a cable."

"What a lot to have to learn ; the ropemakers must be greatly thought of in this town."

The painter tried hard to look interested as he said it.

"Don't you know the ropemakers of the Yard are reckoned the best men in it, and come before even the shipwrights, though they are better paid ? You ought to know something about the Yard, for you told me your father worked in it."

"Very true, sir ; I spoke without thinking at first. I thank you for telling me. For my father died when I was very young."

"Then, Mr. Hill, the shipwrights, though they do get the privilege of carrying home chips in the dinner hour, and making fancy boxes and such-like nonsense to sell to visitors, follow us in all ceremonies on State occasions. It was not so many years ago when the King paid us a visit, then the ropemakers, in their clean white duck suits, each carrying a wand, led the procession ; why, the King's carriage was drawn by leading ropemakers, myself among them !"

"What a wonderful privilege," remarked the painter.

There was something in the tone of the man's voice and the curl of his lips that troubled Mildwater.

"We are simple folks here," he said, "easily pleased, and though we twist rope in the King's Yard, are no better than other people. There is nothing to brag about because we make rope with a white heart yarn, I know, but all the same we are loyal men, and we like to keep up our old customs."

The painter altered his tone as he answered :

"Yes, yes, of course ; it is important work. If it stopped, how the country would be affected ; for the ships could not be got ready for sea. It is well that loyal men should be given it to do."

"Yes, that is why the officers will only employ those who have served their time and belong to the guild. But now that we are busy fitting out so many ships, new hands are taken on here who serve as labourers to the ropemakers, and perhaps before long the master might give you something in that way to do at the hemp house."

"Oh ! a man could get work in that building, then ? "

Mildwater hesitated a moment before he replied :

"Perhaps, if he were well spoken of by one of us, just to move the hemp about and such-like jobs."

Then they went back to look at the hemp house. Inside it was almost dark, for along either wall, to the height of a tall man's head, bales of hemp were piled up and stowed so deeply that the wall of hemp was of such a width on either side as to leave only a narrow central passage down the store-house. The pleasant, wholesome, ship-like smell of the tarred rope was too strong for the stranger, and he complained of it, asking were there no passages for air to enter the building.

Mildwater again looked doubtfully at the man. He could see nothing wrong about the place, and he said so, pointing out that, of course, there were alleyways for the air to run along. Behind the hemp walls was a narrow passage right round the building, and the ropemaker showed the painter how the bales were packed upon dunnage, made of old rope and wood, so that all round, under, and above the hemp was a beautiful current of air.

Hill was shown all these wonderful things in the dinner hour, and the bell now ringing for the men to return to work, the painter left Mildwater to his duty, and went home to the little house in Chapel Row. As he walked past a shed near the gate, Hill looked curiously upon the little hand fire-pump all in readiness

in case of an outbreak of fire, capable, if smartly handled and the hose was long enough to reach the water, and if the men who understood its working were handy, and provided the blaze was not too big, of putting out a child's Guy Fawkes' bonfire.

CHAPTER V

SURGEON BRAND

MR. WARNER was quartered in the great tower of the keep of Portchester Castle, the only one of its many towers considered secure enough for such a prisoner. Even its eight feet thick walls were in such a state of decay that in places they crumbled beneath the touch of a man's hand, and each time a salute was fired from the King's Bastion at Portsmouth, the green ivy clinging to every wall was sprinkled white with showers of dust shed by the venerable stones.

The American's room was on the second storey of the tower, and some fifty feet from the ground. His windows were mere narrow loopholes, and when locked in at night he felt that he had no more chance of getting out of the castle, old as it was, than if he had been prisoner in a dungeon of the Bastille.

The lodging was not luxurious—the great bare-floored room was only furnished with a pallet bed, a small deal table and a couple of rush-bottomed chairs. At night two wretched candles just enabled the

prisoner to find his mattress, and though Bagshott, by way of supplying the young man with wholesome reading, had provided a "Pilgrim's Progress" and a Bible, the rebel, with this limited library, felt no great temptation to injure his sight by trying to read at nights.

A narrow staircase led through the room to the top of the tower, and the prisoner could by its means get a fine view of the harbour, where lay the ships fitting out to help subdue his rebellious countrymen, and beyond that the sea, the highway to his home. In another direction he could look out across the little village of Portchester, behind it Portsdown Hill, its chalk pits glistening patches of white against the green-coloured slopes, and then the yellow road winding past them to London.

But up here Mr. Warner was reminded too forcibly that he was a prisoner, while beneath his feet, when he essayed to climb the stairs, the crumbling mortar fell at every step, rendering him so nervous that most of his time he preferred to spend in wandering about the castle grounds, where, though the high walls shut out the view, and the escort following at his heels was at first a little trying to his patience, he managed to get through the day not altogether unpleasantly.

In the daytime he had full liberty of the grounds, though always followed at a short distance by a

couple of soldiers, and this privilege of taking the air, the Governor warned him, would be withdrawn if he spoke to other prisoners. But he had no inclination to transgress in this way. The others were kept at a remote part of the grounds, and entertained themselves in their own way, gambling with pebbles for their food allowance, and looking in their dirt and raggedness such a cut-throat lot of rascals that even the man in the iron mask would have shunned their company.

And besides, the American had made other acquaintances. With the Governor and Lieutenant Stockleigh he could make no headway, and after the first few days of his confinement nothing but the barest civilities passed between Mr. Warner and Captain Bagshott.

The Governor, the morning after Warner's arrival, visited his quarters and held some talk with him on the sin of rebellion.

"I am sorry," said the old man, "that I am compelled to give you such poor comfort, but then, you know, Mr. Warner, the consequences of resistance to lawful authority are always—"

"Don't trouble yourself in the least on my account, Captain Bagshott. Do your duty; I shall not complain—in fact, I am very comfortable, but for the thought that I am lying useless here when my

countrymen need every sword they can get to repel your troops."

The speech was an unfortunate one, and the American's sense of politeness made him sorry that, on the impulse of the moment, he had uttered it.

The Governor answered angrily :

"We hold very different opinions on that score, young man, and I hope before long, when a few ringleaders are hanged, you will see fit to change yours."

Mr. Warner smiled deprecatingly.

"My dear sir, I was wrong, of course. Your sentiments are what should be expected from a British officer, and mine are out of place here."

The old man was mollified, and putting his hand on Warner's shoulder, he said :

"Young man, your father or his father was probably an Englishman, and you are a gentleman. I don't ask why you have been sent to me in this way, but I am sure it must be for no trifling crime against the State. As a man old enough to be your father, let me urge you, if it be not too late, to put yourself right with my superiors and your lawful rulers."

"You are very kind, Captain Bagshott, and I heartily appreciate your goodness. By the very act of my arrest the British Government has put it out

of my power to clear myself, and before long I think they will have excellent reasons for regretting their blunder."

This settled the old Governor, who bowed stiffly, and without another word left the room.

Lieutenant Stockleigh was still less companionable. Every night and morning he himself locked and unlocked the prisoner's room, and every night and morning he bade him good-night and good-day, and never by any chance uttered any other word, merely answering yes and no to all attempts of the American to start a conversation.

But with the coming of the surgeon the American's solitude was ended. Surgeon Brand's duty required him to visit all the castle inmates once each day, and enter their condition in a report for the Governor. On his first visit to the American, the surgeon entered the room, extended his hand, and said :

"I fancy, sir, there is nothing wrong with you, except, of course, the wicked condition of your mind, but as I am not the parson, but the doctor, I can't help that, and what is more, it's none of my business."

Warner saw the twinkle in the other's eye, and laughed pleasantly in response.

"You are right," he said. "I am well enough, except for the irritation of being laid by the heels in this musty old castle of yours."

"Faith, I cannot remove irritation arising from that cause, but I can lend you some books, and give you half an hour of my poor company before you are locked up for the night, if you will accept the offer."

"You are very kind, and I shall be grateful if you will come and talk with me sometimes; but I make a condition, if you'll forgive me for bargaining over such a generous offer."

"I think I can guess what your condition is; but by all means name it."

"Don't lecture me on the wickedness of rebellion."

The doctor laughed heartily as he answered:

"Pooh! from what Captain Bagshott let fall I thought that was your fear. My dear sir, I don't care a straw about your politics. The dear old gentleman who is in charge of us is as fine an old fellow as ever lived, but his confounded loyalty tires me sometimes. Don't fear that I shall trouble you on that score. I've been treated too scurvily in England and too well in America not to wish the Colonies a happy issue out of their quarrel."

"What! Are you with us?"

The American lowered his voice and stepped forward eagerly, with outstretched hands.

Brand stepped back and put his hands behind him, as he replied:

"Gently, young man; don't jump at conclusions so hastily. I am in the service of King George, and draw his pay, which I assure you is small enough, yet very important to me. But make no mistake, I'm on the side I serve, so give me no confidence, and count me as a friendly enemy."

"Alas, sir, I thought that you said you were an American and—"

"No, only that I had been in America, and I like the Colonies and the Colonists. Believe me, there are many Englishmen of the same way of thinking who have not been in America—many who are heartily ashamed of and regret the war, but who are perhaps a trifle less ready than I am to acknowledge their opinions."

"Never mind, we can still be friends—friendly enemies, as you say."

This was the beginning of an agreeable intercourse between the two, and every day the surgeon spent an hour or more in the American's company.

The Governor, finding that the spirit of rebellion was still in his prisoner, came to the conclusion that he was a very dangerous fellow, and gave a general order that when the American took his walks in the grounds he was to be prevented from having intercourse with any other inmates of the castle, Lieutenant Stockleigh, Dr. Brand, and Parson

Bramber being the only persons exempted from this regulation.

"Dolly, my dear," the old man said to his daughter, a day or two after the American's arrival, "I need scarcely tell you that you must take no notice of that rebel if you should chance to meet him; the man is a very dangerous fellow, and while I don't mind you going about among the other poor ignorant rascals if it pleases you, of course you will not even speak to this Warner."

"No, of course not, father, though really I cannot see what the poor young man can have done to be looked upon as such a monster."

Of course Bagshott lost his temper, and soundly rated Dolly—the idea of a child of her age questioning his ruling; she had had too much liberty, and needed sadly a mother to keep her in order.

And this was true enough, for Dolly, it must be confessed, was somewhat wilful and inclined to act upon impulse, more even than the average of her youth and sex. Her father, knowing little of the world and still less of the ways of women, had married a fine lady, who had somewhat looked down upon his homeliness, and Dolly often found him lacking in sympathy, and wrong in judgment, in matters concerning the sex from whom his fifty years of sea-going had still further divorced him, and so she,

loving him none the less, soon in most things governed him.

But she was a lovable little woman, and all the castle's inmates cheerfully submitted to her rule, and the greatest proof of her power to win men's hearts lay in her influence over the castle surgeon.

Brand was forty years of age, tall and lean and ugly, and what was worse, poor and friendless. In his younger days he had been a dreamer, and had gone abroad and studied medicine on the Continent in the hope of attaining eminence in his profession. Abroad he had picked up some real science, and with a strong brain and a light heart for all his capital, set up a practice in London. He was a century too early. Rival practitioners found that occasionally, and by means contrary to the practice and etiquette laid down by the faculty, he had saved the lives of patients they had nearly killed, and so they dubbed him quack, and soon he became a bankrupt.

Again Brand went abroad—to America, some said—but he never talked of his affairs, then he turned army surgeon, and somehow, for no one in the castle knew by whose influence he obtained the appointment, a few years later became surgeon to the garrison of Portchester, responsible for the health of the prisoners and their veteran guard at forty pounds a year.

Brand seldom spoke to any man or woman, except Dolly, unless it was to level some biting sarcasm at their heads, and he, who nearly always looked upon those who sought his aid as only shamming sick to avoid work, was ever ready to attend to Dolly's lightest complaints, and even pretended to believe in, and prescribed for her sick headaches.

On fine afternoons it was Miss Bagshott's habit to take a stroll about the castle grounds, sometimes even having a word with the rascals in the prisoners' part; for she had grown used to their unwholesome appearance, and the veriest devil among them all was always saint-like in his demeanour when the Governor's daughter was anywhere near him.

So that it came to pass that, in spite, or perhaps in consequence of Captain Bagshott's prohibition, Miss Dolly within a fortnight had twice encountered the American. Each time the rebel had bowed to her with great dignity and passed on; but there came a third meeting, when Mr. Warner stopped, and said:

"Good morning, Miss Bagshott."

Dolly, taken by surprise, curtsied deeply, and replied: "Good day, sir," then hurried on her way.

For a day or two after this Miss Dolly did not go near the American's exercise ground, but kept to a part where he was never seen, and there one

afternoon, while leaning over a parapet watching the autumn tints of the declining sun upon the waters of Portchester Lake, she was startled by a footstep close beside her.

It was the rebel. He touched her lightly upon the arm, and said :

"Forgive me if I startled you, but you have nothing to fear ; see, my guard is within call. I could not help speaking to you, you remind me so much of my sister at home, and it is very lonely here."

Dolly looked quickly about her, conscious that her father's anger was sometimes of a kind not to be encountered in the presence of a stranger, then she answered :

"You did startle me for a moment, sir ; but I am not allowed to talk to you, though, of course, I am very sorry."

"And so am I. It is most unjust that I should be treated in such fashion."

The girl looked at him and smiled, as she answered :

"Why ever don't you put yourself right ? Don't be a rebel, and then they won't keep you here."

"You don't understand, Miss Bagshott. I assure you that they have made a mistake, which I hope will be explained, and we shall become friends."

"Perhaps so ; but at present you know I must, like

a dutiful daughter, take my father's view of your case, and so wish you good afternoon."

Then Dolly, with a demure droop of her eyelids, made a very dignified curtsy, and ran down the slope of the parapet, and was out of sight before the American had had time to more than raise his hat.

CHAPTER VI

MR. WARNER MAKES THE MOST OF HIS PRIVILEGES

A FORTNIGHT later Dolly Bagshott came in from her afternoon's walk, and pleading to her father that she had a sick headache, went straight to her little bedroom and locked herself in.

The looking-glass on the dressing-table, as the girl sat in front of it, reflected a colour on her cheeks and a glitter in her eyes that all the world, she thought, could detect came not from walking exercise. She saw the tell-tale symptoms, and remembering what caused them, for the first time in her butterfly existence she was frightened at the prospect of meeting face to face her father—so terrified at the prospect that, after a moment's endeavour to calm herself by clenching her little hands and setting her teeth tightly together, she gave it up, and dropping upon the bed, muffled her face in the counterpane and burst into violent crying.

Every day the American had contrived to meet her in his walks abroad, and every day she had made a firm resolve to avoid him ; but every day had ended as the day before. She had met him, had talked and walked with him, and gradually the meeting of these two had become to them the event of each day, the talk between them less and less of the commonplace, and more and more of the personal, until upon this afternoon there came the crisis.

"I have told you it is a mistake," he had said. "I have assured you that we shall meet again in happier circumstances, but you are right, Miss Bagshott ; while I am a prisoner, we must not see each other, and—yes, it is a beautiful view."

The last remark was for the benefit of the two soldiers who had come within hearing. But they understood. "Keep well in the rear, Dick. 'Tis a dull old place, and the bit of love-making won't do any harm." This is what one said to the other, and the state of affairs had become known to half the guard as, day after day, the men whose turn it was for duty saw for themselves how the land lay.

"But surely you can clear yourself ; truth will prevail, and—and you know you confessed to me that you are a rebel. I don't understand. Go to my father, tell him the whole truth, and he will make them look for the right man."

"If I were only free for twenty-four hours I could explain it all. Many days have been lost now, but I cannot explain. Only trust me, Miss Dolly."

As he spoke, he took her hand, and she, unresisting for a moment, stood still, the two of them unheeding of the low, warning whistle and cough from the soldiers, until a stern voice said :

"Upon my word, sir, you make a fine use of your exercise ground !"

It was Dr. Brand who, with his most vinegar-like smile, stood watching them.

"And you, young lady, you seem to have made friends with this gentleman. The thing is surprising, even to such a citizen of the world as myself."

The American stepped in front of the girl and answered sharply :

"There is nothing for you to be surprised at, sir. Do not go away, Miss Bagshott ; I know our friend, and I am quite sure that I shall presently satisfy him perfectly."

"You know very little of him, sir, if you think that he will not want a very clear explanation immediately. Meanwhile, Miss Dolly, I advise you to go back to the house."

"You are very kind, Dr. Brand, but I am quite able to decide what is fitting for me to do. This

gentleman and I were conversing together when you saw fit to interrupt us. Why, pray ? ”

“ My dear Miss Bagshott, we will not discuss that ; go back to your father, who has the right to assert his authority over you, and this gentleman—Mr. Warner and I—will talk over this—this—this breach of the regulations.”

Then Dolly's lips began to quiver, but she braced herself up for a moment, and said, so huskily that her words could scarce be understood :

“ Go away, Mr. Warner, please ; Mr. Brand will talk with you later. Meanwhile, I must see him alone.”

“ But, Miss Bagshott, I must—”

“ No, no ; go away, please, for my sake.”

“ Very well. Mr. Brand, I am going to my quarters. I should be glad to see you there when it pleases Miss Bagshott.”

“ Never fear, sir ; I will be with you shortly,” said the doctor.

The American bowed and walked away, followed by his escort, who had watched the whole scene from the foot of the parapet, where they had been standing just close enough to overhear an occasional word from the three principal actors grouped above them.

“ Now, Miss Dolly, what have you to say to me ? ”

Brand spoke harshly.

"Simply this, sir." She was quite calm now—much cooler than the surgeon, who kept moving to and fro half-a-dozen paces, and who hung his head as if unable to face the girl. "Simply this, sir. You are, of course, about to tell my father that you have caught his daughter and a gentleman, whose misfortune it is to be unjustly kept prisoner, talking together in such manner as to suggest—to suggest—in short—" Then her firmness suddenly leaving her, she burst out crying.

Brand's severity melted to a wonderful softness.

"Don't cry ; don't cry, Dolly," he said. "Tell me all about it ; trust me. Your father be hang—no, I mean I won't tell—that is, explain this wretched business, and—and—"

"That is more like yourself. Come, sir, we shall get along now. Of course I will explain."

Dolly was all smiles through her tears.

"But how far has it gone?"

"How far has what gone? You know, Mr. Brand, he is a very honourable young gentleman, and quite innocent of any crime."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. And I assure you that when he took my hand we were parting never to speak to each other again until he came back a free man."

"I am glad to hear it. And when will that be?"

"That is just what we were talking about when you came up in that suspicious way. He must be helped to clear himself; he can do nothing shut up in that horrid old keep all day."

"He seems to have been given too much freedom as it is, and to have got deeper involved in consequence."

"No; we must help him to prove his innocence."

"We must, eh? Well, I should be very glad to clear him, since you seem so concerned about it."

"I am concerned. You have always been good to me; will you help him for my sake?"

"Listen, Dolly; answer me truthfully. What does this holding of hands mean? Why was he standing with his head bending over you, as only someone very near or dear should be permitted to stand? Tell me plainly, Dolly, how far has this gone?"

Brand spoke earnestly, looking very straight into Dolly's eyes, and she looked back as honestly at him, and answered:

"Dear sir, I swear no words have passed between us—nothing but what you saw and heard!—but," and now Dolly's eyes sought the ground again, and her voice was but a murmur, "I know—he knows—we understand one another."

"Very well, Dolly; I like the man for his own sake, but I like not his meeting you thus—this secret business is not what I would have thought of him—

but," he in his turn faltered—"but I love you, Dolly, I love you very dearly—as another father or an elder brother might."

The girl looked shyly at him for a moment, some instinct brought a stronger tint into her blushing cheeks, but the half-formed thought passed away, and she felt that in the two years she had known him, she had learned to love him as a daughter or a younger sister loves.

Then recovering his natural manner, Brand said :

"No more talk of this matter, Miss Dolly, and no more breaches of regulations until I see you again. I will have some talk with this—this gentleman. Meanwhile, we will keep the affair to ourselves. Go away now."

"Thank you, doctor ; believe me that I am grateful for your goodness. I know that all will come well. You are indeed like a brother."

Then, feeling that tears were coming, Dolly made a bolt for it, and ran into the house to have a good cry in her bedroom, as we have said.

Dr. Brand, when Dolly left him, went straight to the American's quarters. He had made up his mind, and as soon as the door was closed behind him, said :

"I will come to the point at once, sir. Miss Bagshott's happiness is a matter of great concern to

me, and if her father knew of the intimacy between you, the consequences would be serious ; therefore I ask you to be frank with me."

Warner looked the other straight in the eyes, as one who had no cause to be ashamed. Then he replied :

" Nothing would give me greater pleasure, doctor, than to convince you that I consider Miss Bagshott's happiness before all things else, and in proof of it, when you came upon us we had parted not to meet again until I was a free man."

" When is that likely to be ? Do you think that Captain Bagshott would ever consent to part with his daughter to an American ? "

" As to that last question, the old man's scruples could perhaps be got over when the quarrel is ended. It won't last much longer, I am sure of that. But as to the first question, I confess I am puzzled. Has Miss Dolly told you all that passed between us ? Has she confided in you the reason why I am held here, and why I am compelled to be silent when I might open your old castle gates by a word ? "

The doctor hesitated. Dolly had concealed something. Perhaps, after all, the American was playing a dishonourable game, in which case, thought Brand, he has made a mistake in his man.

" Miss Dolly has told me several things, and hinted

at others, but I prefer a straightforward statement from yourself. I should like to decide between two versions of the same story," he replied, smiling in a pleasant, sympathetic way, which invited Mr. Warner's confidence.

"In a few words, then, doctor, here is my story. I came over from France with certain instructions and some money from two American citizens, whose names I won't mention, but whom you know well enough. My business was to see and pay a man who is—a—who is, in short, a spy in our service. The English Government has its agents watching every movement of our agents in France, and of course they were ready for my coming. But the point is this: they have taken me in mistake for the spy. They had certain very particular reasons for taking that spy, but they had not the least evidence which would justify my arrest. Evidently their information has not been altogether clear, and so they are keeping me tied up here until they can prove something against me, or until they come to blows with France, when my French protection will be worse than useless."

Brand frowned.

"A very pretty muddle. But what is the word that you might speak, and won't, and why don't you utter it?" he answered.

"Don't you understand? I have only to say to

the Governor, 'Captain Bagshott, your Government has got the wrong man ; so and so is his name. He is to be found at such and such a place. You can identify him by this, that, and the other ; take him, and let me go.' ”

“ And you won't betray the other man, because he is a spy, and you are—an agent ; I suppose that is the distinction ? ”

“ Would you purchase freedom at the price ? And, besides, what you don't know and won't believe is, that my visit to the man would not have injured your Government, but, on the contrary, would have prevented a disaster. By my arrest they have injured their own cause. It serves them right. Their muddle will bring about a catastrophe. As I have said, it serves 'em right. I don't care now ; they have made a devil of a mess of it, for all their cleverness, and in the interests of America I am glad of it.”

The doctor turned sharply upon Warner and answered :

“ But since I happen to be in the English service, it is my duty to take care they get the right man, and so, suppose I re-tell your story, what then ? ”

“ First, you won't, because I have told you this in confidence—a confidence I was forced into giving you on account of a lady. Second, if you were dishonourable enough to repeat what I have said, you would

gain nothing. You can't find the other man, and your superiors would not thank you for interfering."

The doctor took a couple of turns across the room and thought for a moment. Presently he said :

"Is there no middle course ; is there nothing can be done by writing to—"

"Yes, that's just it ; as I was telling Miss Bagshott yesterday, if I could get a letter to—"

The doctor whistled softly. "Yes," he said, "yes, a letter to the authorities ?"

"The authorities be hanged ! A letter to our man, of course."

"The devil. This is what you suggested to Miss Bagshott, is it ? And what did she say ?"

"Say ? Why, of course, nothing could be easier."

"And you propose to let her do this for you ?"

"Now, there you do me an injustice, doctor. I proposed nothing of the kind. She offered to do it, and I wouldn't hear of it. Then she suggested you."

"Me !"

"Yes, of course ; I thought she had explained."

"Something, but not all."

"Well, then I thought it over, and I saw there was only one course, and—and well, look here, I have told you so much, and I might as well out with it all. The long and the short of it is I won't give this man up, but what I must do is this : I want to communi-

cate with him, and I want to get out of this place for three or four days. At the end of that time I will return and give myself up, or the French Minister in London will satisfy your Government, and clear me, and no one in the castle shall suffer for my temporary absence from it."

"And what part was Miss Dolly to play in all this beautiful plan for your escape—for that is the name to call it by?"

"Nothing, beyond inducing you to arrange it—nothing, I swear," said the American, and he said it quite coolly, and enjoying the doctor's astonishment, his brown eyes twinkling with fun.

Brand, however, saw nothing amusing in the plan, and he shook his head very emphatically.

"Miss Bagshott has overrated her powers of persuasion," he said. "I will not assist you to escape, but I will help you to a certain extent, and if you attempt anything beyond that, I myself will be the first man to take every care that you don't leave here."

The good humour of the American was gone. He answered :

"Very well, sir ; you are perfectly justified in making me such an answer, and I was a fool to expect any other. Let us forget the incident."

"Wait a moment. Frankly, I suspect that the

mere delivery of a letter means something vastly more important to you than you make it appear, and he who helps you to do this thing may be placing himself in a mighty awkward position—mind I only suspect, I don't want to know. Very well, knowing so much, I will undertake to deliver the letter. Don't involve me more than you can help, and above all, Miss Bagshott must have nothing whatever to do with it."

The American's good-humour came back again.

"Thank you heartily, doctor," he said, "you are behaving very generously; how can I thank you enough?"

"Simply by not asking me to depart more than is absolutely necessary from what is my strict line of duty, and by asking nothing from Miss Bagshott."

"To be honest, doctor, I confess that in asking you to convey a letter to a certain person I shall be asking more than I have a right to expect from an officer in the service of King George."

"Well, well, ask away. First, I am only a poor devil of a surgeon, who is not supposed to have such a keen sense of honour as is expected from the fighting men—as from Captain Bagshott, for instance; second, as I told you before, I have a sneaking regard for Americans, so go ahead."

Warner smiled pleasantly.

"Very well," he said. "To begin, I must write a letter, and when it is written, I can intrust it to no one but yourself, and you must deliver it to a man living at Portsmouth."

"There are a great many men in Portsmouth, Mr. Warner. I shall want a plain direction for this pleasant mission. There must be no asking people questions as to where he lives, and so on."

"I will explain—and this is where I ask you to promise, upon your honour as a gentleman, not to divulge what is a secret belonging to my Government—I do not care what you may feel to be your duty with regard to myself, but I tell you candidly I am putting this man's life in your hands."

"You want me, then, to put myself in communication with an American spy?"

"As bad or worse."

"Can there be anything worse?"

"Yes, but I can explain no further, except as I have said, your people suspect me to be this very man—I am sure they do, and this is a great injustice to me." Warner stopped a moment. Then he added: "I would not be such an infernal rascal as he is if the freedom of all America depended upon it."

"And you want me to communicate with this man, notwithstanding your opinion of him?"

"To convey a letter to him. I swear that such letter will be of the greatest advantage to the English Government, and while it may be the means of forwarding my release, it will also, I hope, prevent disaster."

"Very well ; write your letter, give it to me, and I will deliver it."

"One thing more, doctor. Suppose, as a consequence of this letter, I get out of the castle and in a day or two return, or you receive indisputable proof that I am what I represent myself—an American of good family, a gentleman whose only fault is that he belongs to the party of freedom—will you be my advocate with Captain Bagshott? Will you help me in my suit?"

The doctor put his hands behind him, took a walk across the room, and his back was turned to the American when he answered, which was perhaps the reason his voice sounded strange in the other's ears.

"Time enough, sir, when you come back in good odour with the authorities to talk of this. But be assured that no consideration—that no influence that I can bring to bear, nothing that I can do, shall be wanting to secure Miss Bagshott's happiness."

CHAPTER VII

A PEDLAR AT PORTCHESTER

TWO or three times a week John Hill, painter, called at the Help the Lame Dog over the Stile, and asked for letters; but so far Mr. Powditch had received none for him.

“Ah, here’s the job he’s looking for,” said the landlord, when one day a person entered the tavern and asked for one John Hill, who he believed was lodging there.

The person was thereupon directed to Mrs. Mildwater’s house, and having found the place, was informed that John Hill was her lodger, but he was not at home at present.

“How long will he be? Is it any use my waiting?”

“Well, sir, he has gone into the Yard with my husband. Mildwas is trying to get him took on there, and he won’t be back afore the evening. Is there any message or name?”

“Gone to the Yard, is he? No, no name; but a

message—a letter. I think, perhaps, if you will be sure to give it to him, I'll leave it with you."

The speaker's doubtful tone, and the carefully sealed letter, impressed Mrs. Mildwater with a due sense of its importance.

"As you please, sir; but if you leave it with me, I'll be sure to give it to Hill, or you could take it into the Yard. I daresay you'll find him somewhere about the rope house—he has a great fancy for stopping about there with Mildwas—and if it's work he'll be glad to hear of it."

"No, I think you had better give it to him. Yes, it is work; he'll know where it comes from. Good day to you."

Dr. Brand was, of course, the bearer of the letter. He had left the castle in the morning by a Portsmouth bound wagon, executed his mission, and was back at Portchester early in the afternoon, making straight for the prisoner's quarters, intending to tell him that the thing was done. Mr. Warner was not in his room, and Brand made for that favourite walk of the American, where Miss Bagshott sometimes rambled. He found the American there, and caught sight of Dolly walking rapidly away as he came on the spot.

"This is scarcely what we bargained for," said the surgeon sharply.

"I admit it; but this is the last interview. Have you delivered my letter?"

"Yes, though not into the man's hands. He was not at the inn, but in a private lodging near by. I gave it to his landlady, and there's no doubt he will get it."

"I hope that he will, but I should have preferred you to have given it into his own hands, doctor."

"Quite so, but I did the best I could with safety, and I should have preferred you to have kept apart from Miss Bagshott. I have a strong suspicion that you are dragging her into some mess, and by heaven, if you do, sir, I'll—"

"Now, doctor, do be reasonable. I have told you that I will not run off with Miss Bagshott, but will before long honourably tell her father all that has happened."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Later, when he joined Captain Bagshott in the evening game of backgammon, and Dolly, as was her usual custom, sat at her embroidery beside them, Brand was so silent and so little inclined to reply to her attempts at conversation, that even the old Governor noticed it, and asked if he was poorly.

On the forenoon of the following day, when Captain Bagshott was busy in his little office, examining his accounts, there arrived at the main gate of

the castle a pedlar, who was promptly told by the sentry to "Be off out of that ; none of your tribe's allowed inside here."

But the pedlar laughed as he answered :

"That rule is all very well with strangers. Send one of the guard up to the house, the young lady expects me. And, corporal, tell Miss Bagshott the pedlar's come with the ribbons, and if you are not a fool you won't mention it before the old man. Fathers have no liking for poor folk who bring pretty things to sell to women. Here's something for yourself for the trouble."

"All right, I'll tell her, but I don't believe your yarn, and she will only send a message to you to make yourself scarce."

But Dolly came back with the corporal.

"Good day, miss," said the pedlar, "I was sure you would come ; I have all sorts of beautiful things here, if you will take me to some place where I can show them."

"You may come in," answered Dolly, and led the way, taking the man across the green in the direction of the Governor's house, but turning aside to another part of the grounds as soon as they were out of sight of the soldiers.

"What do you bring ? quick, I have not a moment to spare," said Dolly.

"Certain things for the right person," replied the pedlar. "First, here is a note not addressed, but I know you will deliver it rightly. Second, here are two coloured kerchiefs for yourself, young lady, which is all you will find in my pack worth having. Then show me a place where I can leave some things for a friend of mine where he and no other will by-and-by discover them."

"Follow me, and be ready to empty your pack quickly, for we must not be seen together near this place," answered Dolly.

Then she led the way to an old circular stone tower near the keep, which, in the days of the castle's youth, had been a guard-room, but was now little else than a circle of crumbling stones, almost hidden by an oak that grew beside it, and held together only by the clinging ivy.

"Go in quickly, and bury the things under the fallen leaves."

The pedlar did as he was told, and in a moment reappeared, his pack visibly reduced in size.

Then Dolly handed him a purse.

"He sends you this. Now follow me to the gate," she said.

"Be sure to give him the note, young woman. He knows I will make good use of the money, but if you betray us there will be—"

"That will do. I should not have so lowered myself as to practise this deceit if I had not reason enough to keep secret."

"Very true," muttered the pedlar, but not loud enough for the girl to hear. "It is wise to employ a woman in the business, provided he gives her no cause for jealousy."

They were at the gate, and Dolly, turning to the corporal, said :

"See the pedlar clear of the place. I won't have any more dealings with him ; he has persuaded me almost to empty his pack, and he is much too dear in his charges."

"Be off at once," ordered the corporal, "and don't show your face here again."

"Gad, but she's a clever little woman, and she's got full value for her money," said the pedlar, as he went away, walking quickly out of sight along the Portchester road.

After dinner Dolly strolled about the grounds as usual, and soon the American came sauntering towards her. The soldiers prepared to drop to the rear, having come to regard this meeting as part of the day's routine.

"Good afternoon, Miss Bagshott," he said, loud enough for the men to hear. "I have been profiting by your lessons in the castle's architecture, and have

discovered traces of very ancient building in all sorts of places. Now this round tower, small as it is, has three distinct styles."

"Yes, Mr. Warner," the girl answered demurely, "this is the very oldest part of the old place; have you examined the inside?"

"No, not yet. I came this afternoon to do so. I find this poking about into the history of the old place passes my time admirably."

"Here, sir, is a plan of an ancient Roman fortress, copied from an old book, and you will see how much it resembles Portchester." Then Miss Bagshott handed Mr. Warner a piece of paper, and added: "The weather is too cold for me to wander about to-day. Good afternoon, sir."

The American bowed.

"Good afternoon, Miss Bagshott," he replied. "I shall make a sketch of this part of the castle, and compare it with your plan."

The Governor's daughter went on her way, and Mr. Warner, turning towards the soldiers, remarked carelessly:

"I suppose it is not against the regulations for me to explore this old guard-room, or whatever it is?"

"No, sir," replied one of them; "go where you please, so long as you don't try to get outside."

The American laughed.

"There is no fear of that, with you two fellows always at my heels," he answered, and entered the ruin.

"There's some game on," said one of the soldiers to the other ; "the girl handed him a note, and he's gone into the old tower to read it."

"Well, he is a good-hearted young fellow, and the guard-room has had more money out of his purse in the time he has been here than we have drawn from the paymaster, so let him alone."

"Faith, I don't care what he does so long as he don't make a bolt of it," replied the other.

Inside the tower, the American looked through one of its loopholes to make sure the soldiers were not watching him ; then he kicked about among the heap of fallen leaves upon the earthen floor, and presently struck something. It was a coil of fine strong rope, of the kind used to make ratlines. He carefully covered it up again with the leaves, and carelessly strolled round the tower and out again to the open. Then, after talking a while with his escort, and giving them his opinion that the American Militia would never stand five minutes before regular British troops, he handed them a coin to drink his health, and saying it was too chilly to remain out, walked back to the keep through the guard-room, where his escort left him, and rejoined their comrades.

At six o'clock the man who waited on him brought his supper ; two hours later Lieutenant Stockleigh visited the guard, and then, as usual, locked the prisoner in his room for the night. The American heard the guard relieved, and the sentries posted round the walls, and all was quiet. Then he went to a corner of the room and opened his valise. From it he took out several articles, among them a heavy leather bag of money, and rolling them into a cloak, he arranged it like a knapsack, strapping it to his shoulders with the straps of his valise, which he cut off for the purpose. He did these things handily and quickly, as men who have learnt soldiering do them.

Then he stepped across the great room to a recess, where was situated the little spiral stairway leading to the top of the tower. He went up the stairs, and at the top of it pushed aside a small hatchway, and came out upon the roof. Then in a stooping posture, so that the shadow of his figure could not be seen from below, he looked through the apertures in the castellated top.

It was quite dark, except for the lights of Portsmouth town, which could be seen down the harbour. Still crouching, he felt about the floor with his hands, and presently touched a ringbolt. He pulled on this, and by its aid opened a small hatchway, which disclosed a flight of steps.

This was the main stairway to the keep, and the bottom of it was in the guard-room below. He carefully descended this, feeling every step as he went down, and treading as lightly as possible ; but with all his care loose mortar would every now and then fall away, and rattle with a noise that to him sounded like a volley of musketry. The blank darkness of the place, and the ruined state of the staircase, would have shaken the nerves of a stronger-minded man ; and once or twice he stopped, and half turned back, fearful that at his next step downwards he would go headlong to the bottom. But he had gone over the ground often before in the daytime, and knew the stones would give way beneath him, though not dangerously, and presently a few rays of light penetrated through the loopholes and from the hatchway above, and this gave him courage to go on.

Thirty steps down he came to a kind of landing. The stairway continued from this to the guard-room, but to his right the landing branched off a few feet, and then descended a dozen more steps to a narrow passage, at the end of which was a small oak door, so decayed that the wood-work was only held together by the big iron hinges. This door was half open. He passed through, and came upon the roof of a small tower, which overlooked the main road upon the landward side of the castle's walls.

Round this part of the castle ran a dry moat, some eight feet deep, and from the bottom of this moat to the top of the tower was about twenty feet. Looking cautiously over the parapet, on the roadway outside the moat, Warner saw two sentries—one to the right and one to the left of him—the two men, as they paced to and fro, meeting just beneath the tower.

Inside the castle wall, on the other side of the tower, and adjoining it, was the old ruined guard-room, where his rope lay hidden beneath a heap of fallen leaves. The branches of the tree from which the leaves had fallen, and which formed a roof to the ruin, stretched above his head, the small twigs brushing against his face as the light air swayed them.

The American unfastened his knapsack and laid it down. Then he took off his coat and hat, caught a branch of the tree in his hand, and swung himself into it, taking all the care he could to make as little rustling as possible. It seemed to him as if the sentries on the other side of the wall must hear the crackling twigs and the groaning branches. But they gave no sign, and after a few moments' waiting, he slowly crept along until he came to the trunk of the tree, slid down it, and landed in the old room. Through its arches he could see all sides of the grounds. Nothing was stirring, and the only signs

of life were the lights twinkling in the windows of the Governor's cottage, many yards away, and the dismal lantern gleam in the keep guard-room, as far off in another direction.

Warner pushed aside the heap of leaves, and drew his coil of rope out. Then he rolled the coil to the foot of the tree, tied one end of the rope about his waist, and started to climb the tree to the tower again, towing the rope behind him. As he ascended, the weight of the rope and its constant entanglement in the tree branches became such a strain that, strong as he was, the task was almost too much for him. But he succeeded, and after recovering his breath, pulled up what remained of the rope, and coiled it away on the roof of the tower.

Then he dressed himself, strapped his knapsack on again, and took another look at the sentries. Satisfied that at any rate they were unconscious of his movements, he returned to his task. Taking one end of the rope, he passed it through a loophole in the parapet of the tower, leant over the edge and brought the end inside again, thus getting a safe method of fastening it. Then he turned the coil over, and very slowly and carefully he passed the other end through another loophole, and waiting till each sentry was at the extreme end of his post, lowered the rope into the ditch beneath. Now and again, as it went down the

side of the tower, it hung for a moment among the ivy, and then he had to play it, ever so gently, lest the rustle should attract the sentries. But presently it was safely all paid out, and looking over the edge, he saw with satisfaction that it reached the bottom of the ditch, with plenty of rope to spare.

Then he sat and waited. The work had taken him nearly two hours, but to him, when every moment of the night was precious, the two hours had flown, and the few minutes that he had yet to wait before the ten o'clock relief came to the sentries seemed a week of time.

It came at last, relieving the men as he had reckoned upon, each at his corner of the long wall. As soon as the tramp of the guard was heard by the sentries, both men halted, each at the points farthest from the tower. Then Warner, choosing the moment when they were standing at attention, and least likely to look upwards, took his most dangerous chance, climbed boldly over the parapet, and slid down the rope into the dry ditch beneath. There he lay still and waited. Presently he heard the sharp word of command from the sergeant relieving the sentries, and again he breathed freely :

“Shoulder arms! support arms!”

He recognised it was the usual ceremony. They had not seen him,

Meanwhile, the weather, which so far had favoured his escape, for the night was very dark and squally, now grew worse, and heavy squalls of wind and rain followed each other in quick succession, making such a rustle in the leaves of the trees that no sound else could be heard. Keeping close to the side of the moat nearest the road, crawling on all fours, he followed its windings until he came to the main gate of the castle, where there was another guard-room in the gateway, and a sentry standing in his box in front of the main entrance. The wood-work and the rest of the gear for raising the drawbridge over the moat were all that remained here of that old defence, and the moat was quite dry. Very cautiously he climbed the sloping side, coming out of it close behind the sentry-box. Bracing his nerve, and waiting for the puff of the squall, he stepped boldly into the roadway, and in another moment was far enough away from the castle wall to be sure that the darkness and the blinding rain hid him from the view of the guard. Then he took to his heels and ran rapidly along the road till he came to a bend in it. From the hedge in the road at this place a man stepped out of the darkness. The man touched him on the shoulder, and whispered something, then the two went silently and rapidly away together along the road to Portsdown.

And Dolly, who knew that on this night something

was to happen that would startle all the castle's inmates, lay awake in her little room, every moment expecting to hear an outcry, dreading the stern voice of her father giving commands to pursue the fugitive. But the hours passed along until, at some time before daybreak, she fell asleep, believing that nothing could have happened, or sure that, if something had, then the American had got away so far without discovery.

CHAPTER VIII

REMARKABLE BEHAVIOUR OF JOHN HILL

WHEN John Hill came home and found a letter waiting for him, his behaviour was a great disappointment to Mrs. Mildwater. He took the document to his little room, read it there, and had nothing to say to her about its contents. Examined as to whether it was an offer of work, he replied, "Yes, perhaps; but at present I am not sure," an answer which Mrs. Mildwater naturally regarded as "more fitting to give a stranger than a woman who'd been as a mother to him, and 'ad druv her Mildwas nearly to death a-worrying him to get the man took on at the Yard."

Early the next morning Hill was up and away to see about the job, as he said, and he left the house to see about it before eight o'clock, returning, looking very tired, after the mid-day meal was over.

"No luck," he said. "I have to go to Fareham to see a man, and shall not be back to-night."

"What, going to Fareham to see a man at this hour, Mr. Hill?"

"People who want work must not choose their hours, Mrs. Mildwater. I'll go upstairs and pack a bundle."

"What about your dinner?"

"I want no dinner, thank you. I've had a bite of bread and cheese, and will go to my room, then be off again."

Mrs. Mildwater, going about her household work, as she scrubbed the kitchen floor, pondered long over the ill appearance and strange manner of her lodger, working herself into a nervous frame of mind, in which pictures of him dangling from his bed-post, and a "Crowner's quest verdict of suicide from despair at not getting work," persistently appeared in her mind's eye.

But presently the woman had such thoughts driven out of her head by something more alarming. There was a strong smell of burning. Mrs. Mildwater stopped her floor scrubbing and sniffed the air. Outside the door the landing was full of smoke, so thick and so strong with the fumes of sulphur that the woman went off into a violent fit of coughing.

"Oh, Mr. Hill, your room is on fire! Are you there?" she cried, and rattled the handle of the locked door violently.

"What is the matter with you, woman?"

The painter opened the door and stood upon its threshold, apparently quite indifferent to the cloud of suffocating smoke enveloping him.

"Matter enough, indeed! What do you mean by setting fire to the house of a poor lone woman, for that is what I am? Mildwas can't be counted as a man. What do you mean by it? Woman, indeed!"

"I don't understand you. I have only been destroying papers in the grate. See," and he pointed to a heap of ashes; "you have no cause to be frightened."

"Indeed, I think I have great cause to be afraid, making all this smell, and you might burn the house down."

"Have you ever suffered by fire?"

"God forbid, Master Hill. But what are you doing? What is that there?"

"Only a lantern."

"What do you want with a lantern in broad day?"

He stepped to the hob of the grate and picked up something, inside of which was a candle. The article was not a lantern, but a canister bored with holes to admit of the candle burning, but so made that it gave no light.

"This," he said, smiling, and looking his landlady squarely in the face—"this is a little experiment of mine in chemistry—nothing that you need be frightened of."

"Very fine, Mr. Hill, but if you want to do such things you must go elsewhere; I won't have my house turned into a powder factory."

Then she went out of the room and slammed the door behind her.

Dockyardmen then had dinner at noon, and at one the Yard bell rang for the mateys to go back to work. There were then no trains, nor trams, nor 'buses to whirl men away to snug suburban cottages or barrack-like rows of genteel terrace houses, each house with a tinkling piano, a green velvet plush drawing-room suite, and in each front parlour window a glass shade of wax flowers, elevated on a Family Bible on a three-legged table. Men lived close to their work and went home to mid-day dinner. But Mildwater on this occasion had not come home, for it was a special cleaning day with Mrs. Mildwater, and her husband was forced to eat a bite of bread and cheese in the Yard, and have a hot supper when he returned from work in the evening.

This is what Hill was told when, coming down from his room, and making his peace with his landlady by apologising for the fright he had given her, he asked for Mr. Mildwater.

"I'll take a walk to the Yard and say good-bye to your husband, in case I get that job at Fareham. If I get it, I will be over on Sunday for my things, and

say good-bye to you, Mrs. Mildwater. But, anyhow, I don't suppose they'll want me to start till Monday."

"Oh, you do expect a job, then. I thought that letter meant something. Good-bye for the present, Mr. Hill."

Hill reached the gate just as the one o'clock bell stopped clanging, and walked in with the crowd of mateys, more than one of them looking curiously at his long cloak, as indicating that he was a man who put on airs, wondering what was his trade, and in what part of the Yard he worked, or whether he was a visitor.

But as the men filed off to their different occupations they soon lost sight of and forgot him, for he went on his way, not stopping at any of the workshops. As he passed the Naval Academy a squad of youngsters were being exercised with the firelock upon the lawn in front. He stopped to look at them for a moment, and a marine sentry seeing him stand still, came to the attention, thinking he was one of the superior officers of the Yard, since he could thus idle away the working hours. He noticed the sentry's action, and smiled to himself, acknowledging the salute by touching his hat; then he walked on, as if having business elsewhere. The Yard covered ninety acres even then, and he meant to make a survey of it that day.

He turned towards the water side, where at intervals along the wharves ships were lying, or boats were getting in stores, and the boats' crews and the riggers working on the ships, when he stopped now and again to look at them, took no heed of him, except to bustle a little, thinking, as the sentry had thought, that he was an officer of some sort, for officers then were not got up in extravagant gold-laced uniforms. A long cloak, such as Hill wore, might have covered anyone belonging to the Yard, from the Commissioner himself to a quartermaster, or a master boat-builder, or a master caulker.

They did not build ships under cover in those days, but on slips that were open to the sky, and he stood and watched the men climbing about by hundreds on a dozen vessels in all stages of the shipwrights' work, from the cygnet sloop, just laid upon the stocks, whose name was not even thought of, to the *Princess Royal*, a ninety-eight gun ship, then almost ready for launching.

All about where the ships were building lay heaps and heaps of chips thrown off from the adzes of the shipwrights, and there were cauldrons of tar boiling close to these heaps, and not far off oakum in bales, many hundredweights of it. So it had been for years, and Mr. Hill wondered at such carelessness, for he was thinking of the two great fires of 1760 and 1770,

when the Yard had been nearly burned down—but apparently he was the only person who thought of such a thing as the possibility of fire.

Presently he came to a spot where floating in the water were hundreds and hundreds of logs chained together, pickling for the shipwrights. One of these logs was being hoisted by means of a sheer hulk out of the mast pond, as this place was called, on to a lighter. A leading shipwright standing beside Hill on the wharf called to the men who were at this job to bear a hand with that spar, or the *Arethusa* would have to go to sea without her mizzen-mast.

"The riggers shouldn't have been in such a hurry to take the old one out," came back the answer from the sheer hulk; "it will be long enough afore we get this one shaped."

"That fellow's always got a saucy answer," remarked the man on the wharf to Hill; "some of these days he'll be getting hanged."

And Hill answered, the scar on his face opening and his lips curled in a smile that gave him a very grim look :

"There's timber enough for his gallows lying here."

"Oh, the *Arethusa's* old mizzen-mast would do very well for the job," replied the other, and went on about his business.

Close to the logs was fastened the old hulk of the *Royal William*, and on board of her a number of men were stretching a brand new cable, just freshly shining with tar from the rope house. The cable ran out over the vessel's bows with a heavy anchor hanging to it, and riggers were heaving upon a capstan, putting a great strain upon the rope, which led round a timber head with half a turn, thus testing every yarn, from the heart to the outermost one, and squeezing the tar out of it in a running stream.

The painter watched this operation for a few seconds with great interest, then he turned sharply, as if seized suddenly by an idea, and walked rapidly away towards the rope and hemp houses. At the door of the hemp house he stopped and looked in, and seeing the few men employed upon this floor looking inquiringly at his shadow darkening the light in the doorway, he sauntered in towards a group of them who were moving a bale of hemp about.

Presently a man touched him on the shoulder.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" the man asked.

Hill started, and replied hurriedly:

"I am Mildwater's lodger; you know Mildwater. He works in the rope house. I am just taking a look round."

"Very well, there's no harm in that," said the man. "But you ought to come in the forenoon, and along with Mildwater. The foreman don't like strangers about the place. Don't take a fancy to any of the stuff. If you were caught taking any of it—well, they might give you a longer stretch of hemp than you wanted."

"Damn you ! you all talk nothing but hanging in the Yard. What do you mean ?"

Hill, as he uttered the words, turned upon the man with such fierceness that the fellow stepped back quickly, thinking he was about to be struck, and the ugly look that came over the painter's scowling face fully justified the other's fright.

"I ask your pardon, but you've no need to take offence. I meant no harm," muttered the man.

"Well, well, but it is poor joking to remind a man how easy it is to be hanged. Time enough when you're sentenced for that," and the painter laughed grimly. "Can I take a look round before going across to the rope house for Mildwater?"

"You can go where you like, for me ; no one will interfere with you so long as you don't interfere with them," and the man went back to his labour of stowing hemp bales.

CHAPTER IX

BAD MATCHES

LEFT to himself, Hill strolled in a leisurely way through the building. He had been all over the rope house, and knew that place well, but he had not before had an opportunity of thoroughly examining the hemp house, and he determined that afternoon to strike the blow that for days he had been so carefully preparing.

He was afraid it was a little premature—he could not help that—the message brought to him at Mrs. Mildwater's had forced his hand, and he could wait no longer now. But after all, he thought, the whole thing was simple; the bales of dry hemp were in front of him, and in half an hour the business would be done.

Along the whole length of the building on this ground floor he only saw some half dozen men, and these were working together in the narrow centre passage between the walls of hemp, laying a dunnage of old worn rope and of oakum to make a flooring

for the bales. He passed these men without speaking to them, and they, supposing him to be a clerk in one of the offices of the Yard, took no notice of him.

He had now walked half way the length of the building, where there was a ladder leading to the upper floor. He looked behind, and saw in the dim afternoon light, as one sees through a tunnel, that the building, but for the men in the centre passage, was deserted and silent.

He ascended the ladder, until hearing voices near the top of the hatchway, he stopped, his head just level with the floor, and there saw many moving shadows of men, and so hastily retreated and continued his walk through the building until he came to a recess. Then he quickly glanced about, and making sure no one saw him, darted into the narrow passage.

Shut in between the walls of hemp, it was quite dark, and for fully a minute he stood perfectly still and listened, but no sound of men could be heard in the building. The rattle of the whirls or spinning wheels in the adjacent rope house, and the strokes of the shipwrights' adzes and caulkers' mallets—the noises of the Yard—deadened by distance, were almost imperceptible through the heavy hemp walls.

Groping his way, he reached at last the side of the building, and saw then that the hemp bales were laid about two feet from the walls, so that the damp should

not penetrate to them, thus leaving a long, narrow passage down each, as well as in the centre of the building. There were irregularities in this wall of hemp, cavities out of which bales had been taken to be spun into rope by the ropemakers, and interstices where the packers had not fitted the bales close together. Presently, by edging himself along the narrow gangway, he came to quite a big gap in the hemp wall. He squeezed himself into this, and unless someone entered and walked intentionally to this particular spot, he was as effectively hidden as would be a rat in a shipload of cotton bales.

Inside the cavity he stopped and listened again. Above him, in the natural wall of the building, were at intervals rows of venetianed ventilators, admitting air and a little light from the exterior, but ten feet from the ground, affording no one from outside a view of the dark interior; and so, but for these ventilators, he was entirely cut off from light, from sound, from everything.

"This is about the right place," he muttered, half aloud, and then repeated the words louder, noting with satisfaction how the sound of his voice was thrown back muffled by the hemp bales. Then he went over in his mind all that he had learned in the days spent in spying about the Yard, and from Mildwater's discourses with him upon the art of ropemaking.

First, upon the floor where he was, were hundreds of tons of dry hemp fibre, so packed that a fine current of air ran all round the bales and over and under them, yet so closely stowed was the hemp that, suppose a fire were lit where he was standing, it might burn for an hour and no one would discover it, when such a blaze would follow that the floor above would by that time have caught.

Now on that floor above worked the hecklers, the men who heckled, that is, cleaned or combed out the fibre, and on the same floor worked the men who spun that fibre into yarns. The hecklers used oil when working their fibre, and the yarn spinners used hot tar upon their yarns, and there was plenty of both these things upon the floor above ; besides that, everywhere the floor was strewn with combed fibre and spun yarn.

Then, suppose the hemp house got well alight, the rope house running across the Yard alongside it would certainly catch, and once it did so, there was plenty for the fire to feed upon. Hill remembered Mildwater's description, and what he himself had seen of the tons of cordage, all tarred, from spun yarn to cables. Close to the rope house there were sail lofts, paint stores, blockmaking shops, with heaps of chips.

Suddenly Hill stopped thinking, and threw off that

great coat of his. Then the reason for it appeared, for underneath he carried a canvas bag suspended by a belt to his waist.

Jack the Painter unfastened the belt and opened the bag, taking from it a box, which in its turn contained that tin canister which had so excited Mrs. Mildwater's indignation. He removed the lid of the canister and stuck in it a candle which he took out of the box. Then he made a kind of soft nest by loosening and tearing out the stuff in the wall of hemp, and taking from the box a bottle, he saturated the space all round the nest with turpentine. Then he drew out a piece of hemp, and rolling it between his hands, made a long loose tail of it. He passed one end of this fuse into the canister, so that it hung over where the flame of the candle would ignite it. Then he took a tinder-box, a flint and steel, and a bundle of the matches of those days—splints of wood, some four or five inches long, tipped with sulphur.

But though he managed successfully to strike fire, and blow his tinder to a glowing mass, the matches failed him. One after another of them he put to the red tinder, but he tried all, and no flame came. Then he paused from his work and cursed aloud, his generally sallow face growing purple with the exertion of blowing and the fury he was in, and

he muttered the most fearful imprecations upon the person who had sold him these matches.

By-and-bye, recovering himself, he noticed that everything was very still, and darkness had set in. There was little enough light when he entered the building, but shut in by the walls of hemp, the few rays of the declining daylight through the latticed ventilators made the recess lighter than the other parts of the stores, and so he was deceived in the hour.

There had been much time consumed in getting to the spot, and he had wasted half an hour in trying to make the bad matches light. The ropemakers and the storemen in the hemp house, he knew, knocked off early on these dark winter days, and he began to suspect what had in truth come to pass—the men had gone home, and he was a prisoner in the building.

He turned hurriedly about, and groped in the darkness for his coat, and finding it, spent more time in picking off the pieces of hemp clinging to it. He realised that it would be difficult now to get out of the building, and it would not do to be discovered with his infernal paraphernalia upon him, and so leaving it in the recess, he felt his way out between the walls of hemp to the middle gangway.

His eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, enabled

him to make out that the place was closed from end to end. He tried door after door, walking from one end of the long building to the other upon each of its floors; but it was of no use, he could not get out. He was becoming nervous and frightened, and presently coming to the door at the eastern end, he seized it by the handle, and in his excitement rattled it loudly.

The next moment he repented his rashness, for a voice outside cried :

“ Who's that ; what are you doing there ? ”

Alarmed as he was at being discovered, he managed to answer quietly :

“ It's all right ; open the door. I've been shut in by mistake.”

“ I cannot open the door ; the keys have gone up to the office long ago. Who are you, and what are you doing there at this hour ? ” replied the man outside.

Hill was quite cool now. He had made up his mind how to act, and answered :

“ Who am I ? You know very well who I am. What nonsense is this ‘ Who are you ? ’ Open the door at once, or find me some way out.”

The man outside, from the tone of voice and the imperative manner of its owner, began to think that perhaps he ought to know the stranger, and so replied :

"I beg your pardon, sir; I am the watchman, and there must be some mistake."

"There is some mistake, and the Commissioner shall know about this when I get out. Open the door at once."

"Very well, sir. I will go and fetch the keys—"

The watchman was now convinced of this person's importance.

"Confound the keys!" continued Hill. "Am I to be kept waiting while you are getting them? Is there no other way?"

The watchman thought a moment, then replied :

"Well, yes, sir; if you could go upstairs, and open the middle door from the inside, you could lower yourself out by the block and tackle that is used for hoisting in the hemp."

"Oh, I could manage that very well," answered the other, and in three minutes was on the next floor, had unfastened the door, and being an active fellow, had swung himself easily to the ground about twelve feet below.

There the watchman waited for him, not exactly suspicious, but anxious as to the true importance of the offended stranger.

"I don't know who's to blame, sir—" he began.

"It's all right now, my man, there's no harm done. There is a shilling for you for your trouble. I came

in with a friend to see the place, and lagging behind, was shut in before I knew what happened. My friend must have thought I had gone before, so I will hurry after him. Good evening. I know my way to the gate."

The watchman looked at the shilling, said "Thank you, sir," was satisfied, and walked away. Outside the hemp house the Yard was very quiet, for the clock in the tower was striking five, and the mateys had gone home.

The painter went rapidly towards the gate, slackening his pace, though, when he came to the Yard porter's lodge, and bidding the man in charge an affable good-night, he walked out unsuspected.

CHAPTER X

WHAT HAPPENED TO DOLLY

AT ten o'clock one morning, Parson Bramber and Lieutenant Stockleigh were with the Governor of Portchester in the little porch of his cottage. The parson was talking over church matters—the parish church of Portchester standing within the castle domains, which was in Henry I.'s time the Priory of Black Canons, and had been a church for goodness knows how long before then.

The parson lived in a bachelor's home, presided over by his sister, and the parsonage was some little distance along the Fareham road. Miss Bramber was very much the senior of her brother, and ruled him in most things. She had heard that an important prisoner had come to the castle—one who had actually committed the great sin of rebellion—and the parson's orders from her were that this young man, who had never attended church once since he

had been confined in the castle, should be got there somehow, and when caught should be well preached at.

"I have never been near the fellow since," Captain Bagshott was saying, "and I can't make anything of the business. He's likely enough a very dangerous character, and the sooner he's out of my charge the better I shall— Eh, and what do you want breaking in like that?"

The sergeant of the keep guard had hastily thrown open the wicket of the little cottage garden, and looking very frightened, stood before the Governor.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Warner is missing," the man stuttered.

The Governor and his lieutenant stopped, and together turned upon the soldier.

"What the devil do you mean, sir? What does he mean, Stockleigh?" thundered Captain Bagshott.

"The prisoner has escaped," replied the trembling sergeant. "We have searched everywhere for him, but he has got clear away."

"Then someone has neglected his duty," said Stockleigh. "There is a sentry night and day at the door of the keep, besides sentries at every gate

of the castle, and Warner was always accompanied by an escort when he walked in the grounds. Get a file of men, and search for him at once. He cannot have gone far, and is likely enough in the castle grounds somewhere."

"He has had several hours' start, yer honour," answered the sergeant.

"How can that be?" yelled the Governor, in a great fury. "Go, Stockleigh, and find him; send men on horseback along the Portsmouth road, and warn the Port Admiral that he may have him looked for. What do you mean, you fool? How can he have had several hours' start?"

"Please, sir, I will tell you what we have found out, but I would like to see you alone," said the soldier, looking first at the parson, then at the Governor.

Bramber, greatly interested, now moved as if to leave, and Stockleigh had already hurried away to find out from the guard what had happened, and take steps to pursue the American.

Captain Bagshott put out a detaining hand.

"Don't leave, Bramber," he said; "there can be no secret about the man's escape. Tell us what you

know of this matter, and have done with it, sergeant."

The man, with hesitation and repeatedly interrupting himself to "beg his honour's pardon," told how that morning Lieutenant Stockleigh had himself, as usual, unlocked the prisoner's door from the outside, and the lock was then all right. The attendant, half an hour later, went into the room with the American's breakfast, and noticed the prisoner's absence. On his way out through the guard-room the servant mentioned the matter to the guard, who, knowing that Mr. Warner was not allowed to go out without his escort, yet the escort was still in the guard-room, suspected that something was wrong. Then the sergeant ran upstairs to see what had happened, and there found Warner's bed unslept in, and his valise lying open and half emptied in the middle of the floor.

"But how did he get out? Come to the point, you fool! How *could* he get out if the guard had been doing its duty? Were you all asleep?"

The Governor shook the man by the shoulder as he asked the questions.

Stockleigh at that moment returned, and answered for his subordinate.

"He escaped by the help of a rope provided by a friend inside, and by this time he is half-way to the coast of France—that is, if he is wise—and the devil himself would not catch him." Stockleigh spoke very quietly, and with the decision of one who knew.

"What do you mean, Lieutenant Stockleigh?" demanded Captain Bagshott; "what friends had he, and how was the rope provided?"

"Wait and you shall hear," replied Stockleigh, and turning to the sergeant, added: "Go and bring those two men here."

The sergeant left to execute the order. Then Stockleigh turned to the Governor, and said:

"I don't want to shock you, and it would be as well that you should hear what more I have to tell in private."

"What in thunder do you mean, sir?" Bagshott roared at him. "Do you think I care who knows by what infernal neglect or treachery on the part of your men this fellow has got away? Mr. Bramber," he added, as the parson moved away, "you shall not

leave us. Have I anything to be ashamed of, except for trusting confounded redcoats to do their duty properly? Why should I care who hears how the rebel fooled the lubbers?"

"Very good, sir," said Stockleigh quietly. "Here are the men, and they will tell you how Warner escaped."

The sergeant had come back, bringing with him two soldiers, and Stockleigh, turning to his men, said :

"Tell the Governor your story."

The sergeant spoke up :

"Please, yer honour, it was this way. The prisoner got away by means of a rope. He lowered himself into the moat from one of the towers, and the rope was brought to him by a friend of his ; it was planted in the old guard-room, where the big tree grows."

Bagshott stamped his foot and angrily demanded :

"What do you mean by a friend? Who is he, and who planted a rope? What is the meaning of all this backing and filling?"

"The man was a pedlar ; he brought the rope."

"How do you come to find this out now? What was this pedlar doing inside the castle?"

"Please, sir, ask Miss Dolly, who managed the whole thing."

For a moment the Governor was speechless; then he turned upon the sergeant.

"You are a lying scoundrel," he muttered. "What does this mean, Stockleigh?"

The lieutenant nodded towards his men. "Let the others tell all they know; I cannot help it."

Then one of the men with much hesitation said:

"We have been doing escort duty over the prisoner when he took exercise, and we have seen your daughter talking a great deal to the man. They were often together. Tuesday a pedlar came, and the sentry refused him entrance, but Miss Dolly let him in. He brought the rope and planted it in the old guard-room. We didn't interfere with your daughter, because we thought they were only sweethearting."

"You dastards!" cried the Governor, his face white with rage, "there is some treachery in this. The rebel bribed you all, and you would hide your rascality under a woman's petticoat."

"I'll swear it is true," said the soldier. "Ask the surgeon ; he caught 'em together."

At this the Captain fairly lost all control of himself, and made a rush for the man ; but he was restrained by the parson, although he was almost as angry.

"Hear the fellow out," said Bramber, "and flog him after for the lies he has told."

"What does he mean by saying that the surgeon caught them? I don't understand," muttered poor old Bagshott.

Then replied the soldier :

"I was in charge of him in the grounds, and saw him making love to your daughter. He was holding her hands when the doctor came up and caught 'em at it, and my comrade here saw the two the next day, when he was on duty."

"Lies ! all lies ! you blackguards !" cried the Captain. "You saw nothing of the kind. Here, Dolly, come here. Where are you ? Come here and deny this."

Dolly was there. She had come out from the house, and was on her knees beside him ; and before in his blind rage he could see her, came to his ears

the sound of her voice, so low, so pitiful, so full of terror, that her accusers felt ashamed of what they had done, as the words came from her lips :

“ Oh, father, it is true ; forgive me ! ”

At the first sound of her voice he turned towards her, expecting an indignant denial of the accusation, but instead saw his daughter upon her knees begging for forgiveness ; and as he realised the purport of her words the violence of his rage gave way to something more dreadful still.

For a moment or two he gazed at her grief-stricken, and when she would have seized his hand, rudely pushed her from him.

“ Speak to me, father dear.”

“ Go away,” he hoarsely answered. “ Go away ; never let me see your face again. Go to your rebel lover.”

“ Oh, you are wrong ! You misjudge me. I helped him to escape, but not for that.”

“ Go to him ! I don't want to see your face again.”

“ Not that, father, not that ! I swear that you are wrong.”

The old man looked at his daughter,

"What does it all mean?" he said sternly. "Get up from the ground, if it is not true, and tell me what it all means. What is this rebel to you?"

"Nothing yet, father; wait, and all will come well. I helped him to escape, but he will come back."

"Come back? What do you mean? Helped him to escape. Send for Brand; those rascals said he knew something of this."

"He knows nothing, father; he saw us talking together, and ordered Mr. Warner to his quarters. That is all."

Parson Bramber laid his hand upon the old man's arm, as he said:

"The girl is only a country-bred wench, and had no idea of the harm she was doing. Come, Dolly, explain to your father how this rascal managed to persuade you to help him."

"How dare you speak of Mr. Warner as a rascal? He is a gentleman, and will yet return to prove it!" exclaimed Dolly, jumping to her feet.

"If my girl is a country wench, parson, let me tell you she is the daughter of an officer and a gentleman, and by Heaven, I'll teach her to remember it. Listen, Dolly. I will presently talk to the surgeon, and see

what he has to say about this. Meantime, go to your room ; I will join you there directly, and if you cannot give me a better explanation of your conduct, or if you cannot clear yourself of this, I swear that I myself will bring you to justice—will myself carry you to Portsmouth gaol, and lodge you there among the common women of the Point."

Then the hard old man, his grizzled face drawn with the pain of the blow, strode out of the house towards the keep.

Dolly's heart hardened at this speech, and she smiled bitterly, brushing aside the trembling parson's hand as she walked past him to her bedroom.

At that moment Brand came hurrying in. The parson was beginning to explain the state of affairs to him, when Dolly re-opened her door.

"Come here, doctor, I want you at once."

The doctor followed her to her room, and Dolly banged the door in Bramber's face, who, finding that he was alone, and was unable to help matters, went off to his church.

"Mr. Warner escaped last night, and I aided him. The soldiers have told my father about our meetings, and he is waiting to see you. They know nothing

beyond that I helped the prisoner to escape. What will you say to my father?"

"A nice mess you've made," replied Brand; "but I shall take the whole blame. I carried the letter, and no doubt it was arranged through that. I suspected as much."

The girl stood upright as an arrow, looking Brand straight in the face as she spoke :

"You will do nothing of the kind. You will merely tell the truth, which is that you saw us together, and as I have told my father, ordered Warner to his quarters, and me to the house. I have no time to argue, my father will be here directly to see you; but listen, I swear that if you utter a word more, no matter what my father may say or do, I swear that I, who know where Warner has gone, will follow and join him, and never return to my home again."

"But, Dolly, think—"

"That will do, go away; my father will be here directly."

"How can I keep—"

"Go!"

She pushed him out of her room and locked the door, just as her father came hurriedly across the garden.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE LONDON ROAD

WARNER and the man who had joined him outside the walls of Portchester exchanged a few words in a whisper, then broke into a run, and kept up this pace until the ascent of Portsdown Hill compelled them to ease their pace.

Portchester's only street ran due north to the foot of the hill, and along it there were only two or three cottages standing well back from the road, their inmates long since in bed and asleep.

But from the foot of the hill along its crest to the descent on the London Road past the then new and now old George Inn there were no houses. At this spot, as the towers of the castle were shut out by the hill which the two men had just descended, and having regained their wind, they conversed in low tones together.

"You have managed it all capitally, and I thank

you," said Warner, speaking coldly, as to an inferior. "As soon as we get to the inn I will arrange everything, and come to a full explanation."

"We shall enter no inn to-night," replied his companion; "we must push on until we reach Catherington, when I shall go back, and you must make the best of your way alone."

"But the horse. Why have you not arranged for that?"

Hill—Warner's companion was the Mildwaters' lodger—appeared not to notice the tone of the question as he replied:

"Because I had to consider my own safety, and it would have been scarcely prudent to have gone among these gaping yokels hiring horses in advance—a pretty bit of gossip they would have had. Horses wanted in the middle of the night for a stranger: and besides, I was by no means satisfied that the whole affair was not a trap."

"My note explained everything plainly, I thought."

"Yes, it appears very clear to you, but I was mighty dubious at first, and didn't half like walking into that old castle. Then I thought it unlikely they would go such a roundabout way of taking me,

and the mention of Silas Dean, the passport, and the words, 'Do nothing until we meet,' convinced me."

"But you had reason to expect me?"

"Quite true. I had reason to expect a gentleman named Warner, a messenger from France. No messenger turns up, but instead a message."

"But the passport made it clear?"

Warner's tone grew more and more impatient.

"Well, the passport might have been taken from the messenger, and used to entrap me. Even now I am waiting to hear what you have to say that I may make sure of you. But postpone your explanations until we are farther away. I want all my breath," said Hill.

"I will prove my identity presently. But surely you understand that they arrested me in mistake for yourself—that their agents must have suspected there was some unusual design afoot, and having no evidence they could openly use, when my departure from France was known, seized me on landing."

Hill laughed. "Did not the Government know of my landing at Dover days before?" he asked.

"Evidently not; their spies are active and well paid, but they don't know everything."

They had now almost reached the northern border of the Forest of Bere, and were drawing near to the village of Catherington, but although the forest trees were being fast thinned in the need for supplying the Navy with timber, yet their way still lay through a wood of beeches, elms, poplars, and firs, so close as to leave but a narrow cart track in the coppice. A bitter wind was blowing, and heavy rain was falling, and the blackness of the night, the loneliness of the forest, the rustling of the trees, the patter of the rain upon the leaves, made it difficult for the men to make their way ahead, and talking was almost impossible. But still Warner's companion pushed on at such a pace that the American could hardly keep up with him. What few words they had exchanged had been uttered at such breathing intervals when Hill had stopped to pick out the muddy track.

"For Heaven's sake, tell me how much farther we are to go without coming to shelter!" Warner exclaimed.

Presently Hill stopped, and turning sharply upon the other, ignored the question, answering:

"Your letter says: 'Do nothing until we meet.

What does that mean ? When I left Paris, I left it with a certain purpose, known to Silas Dean, and to no other. Do you know what that purpose is ? Has Dean told everyone ? Is it the talk of the ale-houses ? Or do your words refer to something I do not understand ? ”

“ Listen to me for a moment, John Hill, and I will make very clear to you the meaning of my letter. I know you propose to make war on your own account, by a method of your own. I am to tell you that my Government does not approve of that method.”

“ Who told you our or your Government does not approve of my doing it this service ? ”

“ Men who occupy high positions in it.”

“ And did they order you to stop me ? ”

“ Well, not exactly, but they—”

“ Listen to me.” Hill, as he spoke, seized Warner by the arm, and looking him straight in the face, said : “ You are a young man, and consequently a fool, and know not what you are talking about. Your Government wants me to do this thing, and wants you officially to disavow it. You may be sure that every Government cheerfully accepts any aid that will injure its enemy, but it is convenient some-

times to disavow the means—the end is just as acceptable even when accomplished by such tools as I am.”

Warner stepped back from the other's touch as he replied :

“ Perhaps you are right ; but I am sure that the men of honour in the American Government will have no share in this work, and will pay you nothing for doing it. My business in this country was to hand you your money for work as our agent in supplying information, but I was also to tell you distinctly that neither France nor the representatives of America in France will thank you or pay you for acting as a criminal. We make war as becomes a nation struggling for freedom and—”

Hill laughed bitterly.

“ Pooh ! keep your lectures on the art of war for men who only read about it,” he said. “ Whether your superiors approve or not is no concern of mine. I shall act, and as to payment—listen. You may not believe that I am a patriot. Well, I'll not argue with you, but I tell you plainly I have a personal motive in this, and nothing shall prevent me from going on with it.”

"Very well. I reply that, since you admit personal reasons are at the bottom of your design, I have a personal reason why you shall not carry it out, and I ask you to stop."

"What personal motive can you have? And, besides, I have already arranged everything, and it is only by chance that the affair has not come off already."

"Thank God it has not, for I have pledged my word to the man who carried the letter to you that I would interfere—"

Hill made a sudden step towards the other, and exclaimed :

"What ! Did you dare to—"

"No, no ; he knows nothing. I merely told him that the carrying of the letter would prevent a disaster."

"What the devil did you do that for ?"

Warner turned sharply on the other as he answered :

"Come, sir, I have borne your tone quietly, because you accomplished my release, but I will have no more of your bullying."

"Very well ; but do you realise my life is at stake

in this matter? What did your friend understand by your talk?"

"Simply that I might by my interference prevent a raid on the town, or something of the kind."

"What?" Hill laughed out loud. "Why, the man must be a fool if he believed such nonsense; but, of course, he knew better."

"Further than this, I have pledged my word to return to the castle within a few days."

"Well, your pledge will be broken."

"No, it will not."

"Do you mean to say that you will betray me—for if you go back that must be your object?"

"Certainly not; I might have been free long ago if I had chosen that way. But I must return, and I will not allow you to risk my neck or your own by committing this crime while I am in England."

Again Hill laughed as he sincerely said:

"I understand now; that woman has something to do with this. Governors' daughters do not help prisoners to escape without—"

It was all that Warner could do to preserve his temper. But he spoke quietly as he replied:

"That will do, sir; I will hear no more. We have

stood arguing long enough. Let us push on to London, and by the aid of the French Minister I will get you a safe passage out of the country, and my passport will clear me."

Hill stopped and waved his hand.

"Go your way to London," he said. "I will not accompany you farther. My preparations are complete, and therefore I warn you not to return, or you will certainly be made to suffer for my act. As to your passport, I must have that, and I intend to use it for escaping."

"And I warn you that you will be hanged if you persist. If you dare to use a passport with my name upon it, I myself will expose you," said Warner.

Hill drew himself up and replied :

"Look you, the consequence of my act has no terror for me. As you entered the harbour of Portsmouth, you might have seen the very gibbet upon which Felton's body hung. I have stood underneath it, and envied him his chance, and when I have finished my work the people of England will have better cause to keep me in their memory than they have even for remembering the man who rid them of Buckingham."

"You are a vain, fanatical fool. Take this money, which will repay you for what you have expended in

getting me free, and go your way. I will go mine. But understand, I shall warn the authorities as soon as I reach London, and you had better not be found in Portsmouth to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late, and you will not warn the authorities."

"Very well, madman, I see there is no help for it; you will drag me into this against my will. I have sworn to return to Portchester, and by Heaven, since you are bent on putting it out of my power to do so unless as a prisoner, you shall go back with me now."

All this time the wind and rain had been increasing, and the violence of the storm drowned the voices of the angry men, who were now unheeding of all else but themselves. Warner had lost his temper; the long tramp without food on such a night in this man's company had irritated him to boiling-over point, but he was only honestly indignant with the other. No thought of serious mischief occurred to him, and he was blind and saw no danger when Hill took a step towards him, and said very quietly:

"What do you mean by saying I shall go with you?"

"Mean? I mean what I say, that you shan't drag us both to the gallows; either you go to London with me, or I go back to Portchester with you," replied Warner.

"I warn you to be careful. Go your way and leave me to go mine," answered the other.

Warner advanced close to Hill.

"Come," he said, "I have done with this talk; come freely, or I shall take you by force."

"Once more, will you go your own way alone?"

Hill was nervously fingering the fastenings of his cloak as he said the last words.

Warner in his rage took no heed of the action, and losing control of himself, replied by advancing in a threatening manner.

Then the other drew a pistol and fired. An inarticulate cry for an instant rang out above the howling wind, and Warner fell face forward upon the muddy track.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT THE PORT ADMIRAL THOUGHT OF IT

DOLLY BAGSHOTT, having delivered her ultimatum to Dr. Brand, had only just time to shut herself in her room when her father burst into his garden, almost banging the wicket off its hinges. In three strides he was in his office, and glaring at the surgeon, thundered :

“ Now, sir, what do you know of this business ? ”

Dr. Brand stood up coolly before him and answered :

“ No more than your daughter has told you.”

“ And that, sir, is too much. Is it true that you saw this scoundrel talking to my daughter ? ”

“ Perfectly true that I saw the American gentleman who was a prisoner here talking to your daughter. I know no reason for calling him a scoundrel.”

“ I did not ask for your opinion, Mr. Brand, but I do ask you whether it did not occur to you to put a stop to these meetings ? ”

"A moment, Captain Bagshott. I did all that I conceived it to be any part of my duty to do. I beg you will make your report to the Port Admiral, and if there is any blame to be attached to me I am prepared to take the responsibility."

Bagshott was pacing furiously up and down the little room. He stopped.

"Very well, sir, I will go to the Admiral, and we will thrash the whole business out through him. Dolly, come here."

The girl came out from her bedroom and quietly stood before him, her face deadly pale, her head erect, her demeanour altogether defiant.

"What have you to say? I am quite cool now, and ready to judge you fairly."

The old man was at boiling heat, and Brand was almost inclined to smile at his claim to self-possession.

"I have nothing to say, father. Nothing can be said," she replied.

"Do you mean to tell me that the yarn pitched by these soldiers is true—that you and that American were love-making, and that you helped him to escape?"

"That, sir, is the vulgar aspect that the matter

assumes when men of that class talk of it—and you, of course, are ready to believe them.”

The well-bred airs of her mother always came to Dolly’s aid in these encounters with the rough old sailor.

“Just like her dead mother,” thought old Bagshott. “Now, I wonder whether there is something in this I don’t understand.”

“But you actually admitted that what the men said was true. You went on your knees to me not a quarter of an hour ago and said so, and begged for forgiveness.”

“Father, it is true that I talked with Mr. Warner ; it is true that I agreed with him to have the pedlar admitted by the guard ; it is true that he—that we talked together of the possibility that in happier circumstances—that—that—in a word, sir, Mr. Warner behaved as a gentleman, and nothing passed between us of which I am ashamed.”

“How dare you admit this to me, Dolly? How dare you tell me to my face that this man made love to you?”

“Mr. Warner loves me, father, and I have nothing to be ashamed of in that,” said Dolly quite simply.

"'Tis true I was frightened of your anger at first, and went upon my knees to you ; but I did wrong. I had nothing to be ashamed of. Mr. Warner has promised to return and say what more he has to say to you, and before a week has passed he will have kept his word."

"How dare you say this to my face? Never let me hear the name of this fellow again. How dare a child like you talk of love-making?" and the old man shook his finger at Dolly. "But, above all, I swear I would turn you out of your home to-morrow if I thought you would permit a traitor to his country—one of my prisoners—to make love to you. Bah! I don't believe it. I believe you incapable of anything worse than the infernal vanity that belongs to all women—the man has turned your head with silly speeches."

"And I am sure you are right," interrupted the doctor artfully, very glad to see the old man taking such a view of Dolly's case.

But no, the girl would not have it settled thus, and must needs answer sharply :

"You are quite wrong, father, and presently you will be sorry to have spoken so harshly of Mr. Warner,"

"I will not lose my temper, but I'll not have you argue with me."

"Very well, father ; but I insist that you wait for Mr. Warner's explanation."

The Governor shook his head, saying :

"I cannot understand all this. The man has told you some trumpery story, such as only a foolish girl could believe, and you will have to suffer the consequences of your folly."

"If you will permit me, sir, I ask you to let your daughter go to her room," said Brand. "I am sure that this unfortunate affair will presently clear itself. I have reason to believe that the man will return, as Miss Dolly says."

Bagshott turned quickly upon him :

"What the devil do you mean, doctor ? have you, too, been bewitched by this fellow's cunning ?"

"No. But Mr. Warner, there is no doubt in my mind, is not the man they meant to arrest, and from what he told me, I believe he will, once free, prove his innocence," replied Brand.

"Tush ! The fellow has fooled the pair of you. I might have foreseen that this motherless girl, with no one to watch over her but a blind old man, would fall

a prey to the first trap that was set for her ; but you—I had better say no more. Go to your room, Dolly. I must tell the whole truth to the Admiral, and a pretty figure I shall cut before him when I confess that my own daughter has been the cause of my getting into this mess. And you, doctor, might at least have warned me of what was going on.”

The tears came into Dolly's eyes, and she was about to speak, but the doctor anticipated her, and replied with peculiar emphasis upon his words :

“Captain Bagshott, Miss Dolly has already told you all I have to say. If matters had not taken this turn, you would not have seen for yourself how silly Miss Dolly had been, and if she had not explained so clearly her share in this unfortunate business, I could only have told you that I saw the rebel take her hand—that was all, nothing more.”

“It seems to me, sir,” answered the old man, “that a gentleman would have considered it his duty to have reported Miss Dolly's conduct to her father. However, my daughter will have very good reason to regret her imprudence, and we shall see what the Admiral has to say before the day is over.”

“Good-bye, Miss Dolly,” said the doctor, holding

outhis hand to the girl ; " cheer up, young lady. I am sorry for what has happened, but it will come right by-and-by."

Dolly went up to her father.

" I will go now," she said. " Good-bye, father, and forgive me for being too soft-hearted for a gaoler's daughter."

" Dolly, go to your room. For the sake of your dead mother I will keep my temper with you. But I warn you that when this fellow is caught, I'll make an example of him ; and for yourself, I'll take such care of you in the future as will prevent you shaming me a second time."

Then the old man bounced out of the room, and Dolly returned to her work quite cheerfully, sure that the worst of her father's anger had blown over. The Governor, who had indeed considerably cooled down, went out by the water gate of the castle, and embarked in a Portchester wherry to report in person what had happened to the Admiral.

The old man, as he sat in the stern sheets of his boat, trembled at the prospect of the interview. He had already sent a messenger post haste to warn them to look out for the fugitive, who he was quite

sure was now well on his way to the coast of France, and not at all likely to be recaptured.

It was noon when he arrived before the door of the great man's house, then situated in the old High Street of Portsmouth, close to that of the Lieutenant Governor's. A marine sentry presented arms to him, and he was so nervous that he neglected to acknowledge the salute—the only instance when he was known to depart from any service regulations.

There was a little waiting-room just inside the hall, and this was filled with captains of ships lying in the harbour, or with lieutenants bringing despatches, and between this room and the Admiral's office the great man's coxswain, doing duty as orderly, passed continually to and fro.

The captains for the most part knew Bagshott, and asked him chaffingly how his new command was getting along, and when she would sail, and such-like foolish question. They irritated him, and he answered them sharply; and they whispered to themselves that it was ever the way with the old fellows: they liked not to be laid up in ordinary, and envied the younger men, whose prospects owing to the war were of the best.

Presently the grizzled old coxswain came for him, and shaking in every limb the old man tottered into the Admiral's office.

"Sit down, sit down, Bagshott," said the great man. "How are you? I know what you have come about; my secretary's busy in his room writing despatches, and the Lord knows what not."

"Have they done anything—found any boats missing, sir, or got any clue—or—or—"

"Oh, that's all right; don't worry yourself. We are up to our necks in it; tell me all about it."

Bagshott felt that this manner of treating the business was all very well, but perhaps it hid something behind it. The Admiral was taking it too quietly altogether; an explosion of wrath would perhaps have been safer.

"It was entirely my fault, sir," he replied. "Unfortunately this man has escaped through the indiscretion of my own child, and I stand before you disgraced by the conduct of my own daughter, and—"

"My dear fellow, what on earth are you talking about? What has Miss Dolly to do with the escape of this fellow?"

Then Bagshott told the whole story—told it in such fashion that Dolly's indiscretion was lost sight of in the telling, and only the carelessness of her father in not keeping a more watchful eye upon her was brought prominently forward.

The Admiral listened to the old man without interrupting him, and when he had finished, answered in the most off-hand manner imaginable :

“Is this all the trouble? Well, present my compliments to the young lady, and tell her that she has saved us a lot of trouble, and we are infinitely obliged to her.”

“I don't quite understand you, sir.”

“Look here, Bagshott, I don't suppose you do. The long and the short of it all is this : We are not politicians, and we have made a mess of it, and your daughter has got us out of the mess.”

“I am still all at sea, sir.”

“So am I, but I can tell you this much : we received orders to take some fellow who was sent over by the rebels from France to act as a spy on the Dockyard. It appears that the people in London were informed by some infernal rascal of a spy that a man had left Havre or Calais or Dieppe or

somewhere who would claim to be a French subject protected by a passport, and that as we are busy getting ready to fight the French, we didn't want this fellow loose about Portsmouth. The man was a deserter from our Army, and we had a right to make him prisoner. Well, I gave orders to the *Ferret* to look out for him, and the *Ferret* took a man who answered the description, but who happened to be the wrong man."

"But this Warner is an American, and he rejoices in being a rebel," said Bagshott doubtfully.

"Yes, yes ; that's all very well," replied the Admiral, "but he is the wrong man, and what's more, he is under the protection of the French flag."

"But what has that to do with it, sir ? "

"My dear Bagshott, you are so used to looking at the Frenchmen as enemies that you forget we are not at war yet."

"He certainly is a rebel," persisted the Governor of Portchester.

"Of course he is, but anyhow he is not the man, and we didn't know what to do with him. If the French Minister in London knew of this arrest, there

would be the devil to pay, so we just kept him till we came to blows, intending to avoid explanations."

"But you will have to explain now, for he has gone."

The Admiral laughed and answered :

"Oh, by the time the diplomatists have finished writing letters to one another about it we shall have fought half-a-dozen naval battles, and a prisoner here or there will be of no consequence."

"But how am I to answer for his escape ? what am I to do with my daughter ?" asked the old Captain, bewildered by these political complications.

"Go home and thank her for getting her father's friend out of a most infernal mess," replied the Admiral, clapping Bagshott heartily on the back as he spoke.

"How, sir ? What has her ill behaviour done that—"

"Don't you see, you stupid old fellow, that if the American has really fallen a victim to your daughter's charms, he will be glad enough to hold his tongue. As soon as we hear of him protesting, we shall have our diplomatists explaining to him that he ought to keep quiet, and be thankful for the

opportunity they gave him of making Miss Bagshott's acquaintance, and that all he has to do is to go back to Portchester and make his peace with her father."

The old man rose hastily from his chair and answered with great dignity :

"Certainly not, sir. My daughter, I will take very good care, shall not meet him again, and all the infernal politicians and diplomatists in London will not induce me to allow him inside the castle gates again, unless you return him as a prisoner."

The Admiral also rose as he said :

"As you please, my dear sir ; that is your private affair. But I ask you, Captain Bagshott, in the public interest, to keep your own counsel in this matter, and in my interest please go back to Portchester, and for the sake of our old friendship, say no more about it to anyone."

"Very well, sir. I shall punish my daughter, but this matter shall in no way become public."

"That's right, Bagshott. Oh, by the way, who's that surgeon—Brand is his name, I think you said ? He seemed to believe the American's yarn about the mistake, eh ? "

"Yes, sir. As I told you, I am not satisfied with his conduct in this matter. He has American leanings, I fear. He is a good man enough in his way, but he comes badly out of this affair."

"Oh, you think so. Very well, just take my advice and leave him alone." The Admiral looked at the door to see if it was closed, lowered his voice and said : "He was appointed to Portchester by a greater man than you or I ; if you are wise you will try to get along with him. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XIII

FLIGHT

MRS. MILDWATER was not altogether easy in her mind about her lodger. The man, she feared, must have taken to drinking. Beer-houses of the lowest type existed in plenty in Portsmouth town, and the appearance of Hill, and his goings and comings at irregular hours, his strange experiment in chemistry and seeming indifference over the job that the messenger had come about, all pointed to but one explanation in Mrs. Mildwater's opinion—drinking, and perhaps gambling, was at the root of the evil.

The painter had just come home, after being out all night, and he had returned at two o'clock, when Mildwater was away at his work. Hill's appearance justified Mrs. Mildwater's misgivings. He had sneaked into the house covered with mud, wet to the skin, and altogether so haggard and dishevelled that the woman scarcely recognised him.

"Why, whatever has happened, John Hill?" she asked.

He did not answer at once, but steadied himself against the kitchen table. Then said slowly:

"I have had a bad night, Mrs. Mildwater. Got caught in the storm coming home from Fareham."

"But how did you manage to get in that mess; the storm was all over before daylight, and surely you have not been out all night?"

The woman looked curiously at him as she asked the question.

"Yes; all night, ma'am! If you please, I'll have a wash and go out again. I have some business to do." He made towards the door as he spoke.

Mrs. Mildwater shook her head at him, and said:

"Look here, John Hill, it's my belief you've been drinking. Don't give way to that, for if you do, I tell you plainly, you must leave my house."

The painter seemed not a whit abashed at the charge. On the contrary, he replied quite eagerly:

"Yes, that's it. I've been drinking."

"More shame for you to own it, then, in that bare-faced way. Out of my house you must go if you have taken to that habit. You are not a young man,

and I shouldn't wonder but what it has been your trouble before."

"Yes, Mrs. Mildwater, I know it. The truth is, I've been worried a great deal of late about work, and the time has come for me to try somewhere else, for I have had no luck here."

"Very well, Mr. Hill. I think it is time you went elsewhere, for Mildwas will not, with my leave, do anything for you since you have come to this state, so go your way afore we quarrel."

"Be it so, Mrs. Mildwater. I must leave your house, and to - night I'll be off. I will try Southampton."

"I don't want to turn you out at once, my man. Go and put on dry clothes, take a meal and a night's rest, then leave here, and make a fresh start."

"I will change my clothes, and see about getting a lift to-night in the wagon. There's one leaves for Southampton from the Three Tuns. I can sleep in the straw, and arrive fresh in the morning. I'll go and see about the passage directly, and then come back and get my clothes, and say good-bye to you and your husband. You've both been very good to me."

"Very well, Hill, and I hope you will try to keep away from pot-houses and evil companions." And with this parting shot Mrs. Mildwater returned to her domestic duties.

Hill went out to the little back garden and washed under the pump, as was the custom in well-regulated households, such as Mrs. Mildwater's, and when he was quite clean and in fit condition to go to his bedroom, he changed his clothes for a working suit, packing his wet and muddy garments with other things away in a bundle.

Then he came downstairs, and telling Mrs. Mildwater he would be back in the afternoon, by the time the men came out of the Yard, and would then call for his belongings, he left the house.

Outside he walked briskly down the street to the Yard. There he went into a little huckster's shop, and when, in answer to the ringing of the bell over the shop door, the widow woman who kept it asked what he wanted, he answered sharply :

"Some matches ; not such rubbish as you gave me yesterday, but good ones."

The woman looked at him, and recollected she had sold him a halfpenny worth of brimstone matches on

the previous day, when he was clothed like one of the better class, apologised for their bad quality, wondering who this man was, who came to her in such different dress on two succeeding days.

At the Yard gate the porter watched him enter, as one who has important business on hand, and the man, who remembered his face, thought to himself that Mildwater had got his friend a job, by the way the painter was hurrying.

Hill walked straight towards the hemp house, but when he had arrived at its entrance he saw that a number of men were working near the doorway, removing yarn and conveying it to the adjacent rope house to be spun, while at another door other men were rolling in fresh bales of hemp just unloaded from a vessel lying at one of the wharves.

He stood a little while watching them, then moved away to the rope house. The whirls upstairs were in full swing, but on the ground floor only a few workmen, all at one end, could be seen along the whole of its thousand feet of length. He entered the building unnoticed, and walked towards its western end, where there were no men. Upon this ground floor alone were then stored ten three-inch cables,

each cable a hundred fathoms long, and the great coils, like the bales of hemp in the adjacent building, made high walls of rope along each side; six tons weight of smaller cordage lay about in smaller coils, and twenty tons weight of hemp spun into yarn, and reeking of tar, in readiness for the spinners on the floor above, lay in loose heaps near by.

Getting behind one of the great cable coils, he took a survey of his position. He could see pretty well the length of the building, down its centre passage, between the coils of rope.

At intervals the long vista was broken by long ladders leading to the loft above, and on either side, opposite the ladders, were doorways through which the workmen were continually passing. On the floor where he stood, a lieutenant from one of the ships was talking to a storekeeper, while his boat's crew were rolling coils of rope down to their boat. A few riggers were elsewhere picking out the rigging required for their following day's work, and at the extreme end, men were preparing for an important job for the next morning, when a big cable was to be spun for a line-of-battle-ship.

Presently Hill heard the Dockyard clock strike

half-past three, and he knew that if he did not want to be shut in again, he would have to be quick in his movements. This attempt he was determined should not fail; he had dispensed with his elaborate apparatus, and this time a bottle of turpentine, matches and tinder-box, and a fuse of hemp yarn, were all the things he had brought. Behind him was a bale of tar-soaked yarn, in front the long fakes of the cable coil stood two feet higher than his head, but the rope was so thick that the fakes did not lie closely together, and this gave him an idea. He got quantities of loose yarn, and jammed it between the interstices. Then he laid a train of hemp from them to the great pile behind him, and having done these things, he stood and waited for the Yard clock to strike four.

The failure of his last attempt kept occurring to him. As he thought of it he grew angry with himself for delaying so long, and taking such elaborate measures to disguise his movements. What did these fools know? They left the Yard open for anyone to come and go, and in their absurd self-confidence, cared not whether friend or foe visited the place. Why, even when a stranger was locked

in after working hours, by his superior intelligence, his calm bearing, he had made them open a way out for him ; and so he laughed to himself and determined to be very bold this time, and make sure of the fire before leaving.

Four o'clock struck, and he laid his turpentine bottle upon the heap of yarn, and stood ready with his matches. Then, as he did this, the clatter of the whirls overhead ceased, and the men began to flock downstairs on their way home. Hill struck a spark with his tinder-box, and this time the brimstone matches caught readily. He lit the fuse at the end of the turpentine bottle, a train of fire ran swiftly along the ground, and coming out from his hiding-place, the creator of it walked into the middle of the rope house and joined the stream of men hastening homewards, mingling with them as they passed through the Dock gate. He left unnoticed, and walked rapidly away towards his lodgings, intending, as he had told Mrs. Mildwater, to call for his bundle. But just as he had turned from the Dock wall towards the Row, he heard sounds of a commotion, and looking back, saw a crowd of men running in the direction of the gate.

The alarm had come quicker than he had bargained for, and its suddenness dismayed him. He paused and thought of what would be his safest course. His preparations had this time been a little too crude, the fire had spread too fast, and to-day there was a chance of failure in quite another direction.

The commotion, he knew, would put the sentries on the alert all round the town walls, the guard at St. James's and St. Thomas's gates would learn of the fire before a few minutes had elapsed, and it would not be safe to attempt to escape by way of Portsmouth. To pass the King's Redoubt, and get upon the London Road by St. Thomas's gate was to court danger, for a whole garrison was quartered close by. But to the north-east the extended line of fortifications, begun half-a-dozen years earlier, were even more awkward to pass, by reason that the town was not in this direction, and strangers passing that way in time of excitement would be justly regarded with suspicion.

Once more he rapidly reviewed in his mind the town as he had frequently studied it, and once more the idea that he was caught like a rat in a hole forced itself upon his mind. He could attempt to reach the

London Road by way of the Hard to the King's Mill Redoubt, and so to St. Thomas's gate (not then Landport gate, for Landport was still the Halfway Houses), or he could pass through into Portsmouth by the Quay gate, and make his way through the town to St. James's gate on to the sea beach, or through the Spur Redoubt to the swamps of Southsea Common. By these roads he must pass guard houses, sentries, and excited town folk.

Then his strong nerve came to his help, and he decided upon the straight road, and so, taking to his heels, he ran towards the new ramparts to the way out upon Halfway Houses. As soon as he got close to the sentry he called loudly :

"Fire, fire ; there is a fire in the Yard !"

"Guard turn out !" cried the sentry, and half-a-dozen soldiers and a sergeant hastily picked up their firelocks and fell in on either side of the gate.

"What's up ?" asked the sergeant, presenting his pike. "Halt ; what do you mean ?"

Hill, out of breath, stood among them, the sentry, with his musket ported, blocking the gate.

"Fire, fire ; in the Yard ! Send every workman you can find to help," cried Hill.

"Where? When? What are you talking about? Speak up, man; don't lose your head," replied the sergeant of the guard.

"There's a fire broke out in the Yard—it's all ablaze—we want all the help we can get," said Hill, wringing his hands.

"Well, well, my man; it's no use coming to us. We can't leave here without orders; we can only pass the word along," answered the soldier.

"Yes, yes; that's what I'm here for, to rouse the townfolk," and Hill attempted to pass on.

"Very well, you had better go by the other gate; the people at the Halfway Houses won't do much good."

The sergeant and the sentry still blocked the way.

"Man, man, that's it! others have gone that way. You take it easily enough; don't you understand the Yard's afire, and every hand is wanted?"

"What do you want us to do, you noisy fool? We don't guard the engines."

"No, no; but I've been sent this way, the Commissioner sent me to rouse the folks, others have gone by the other gates."

This mention of the Commissioner satisfied the

sergeant at once, and he promptly waved the sentry out of the way, saying :

"Well, why didn't you say so at first? Go ahead, and I'll send one of my men to the barracks, but by the time he gets there the whole garrison will be out, I'll swear. Go on, but you won't find anyone much use to you this way."

Hill waited no longer, but passed through the gate, running desperately until he was lost to the view of the soldiers in the darkness of the winter evening.

When he got well upon the London Road, he once more slackened his pace to a quick walk, and so kept on his way along the quiet country road until he passed the Flying Bull, the last inn on the Halfway Houses road, where presently he heard the sound of cartwheels behind. He stepped aside, and waited for the vehicle to overtake him, and presently saw that it was driven by a woman. He went into the roadway.

"Will you give me a lift?" he asked.

"I am only going a little way—to Cosham," answered the driver of the cart.

"And I am bound to Petersfield, and shall be benighted unless I can get a lift."

"Very well, my man, jump up. But what is the

matter? You seem in a great hurry to get out of the town," and the old woman looked doubtfully at him.

"The town is very dull," he said. "I can't get work, although there are so many ships fitting, and they are so busy with the new ramparts."

He looked at her carefully as he spoke, wondering if she knew how little dulness there was in the town that evening.

The old woman sighed :

"I know it is very quiet for poor folks. At the market to-day I made little money for my vegetables."

"Yet they are busy at the Dockyard," said Hill.

"We country people do not trade with the sailors or the mateys; the bumboats be the only folks as makes money in war times, master."

It was evident that this woman knew nothing of the fire, and so Hill again bade her hasten her pace.

"The mare is very tired, but I will drive her as fast as possible for you," she said.

They were nearly up to the Battle of Minden at Hilsea, and the old woman began telling him how, ten

years before, the landlord had been cruelly murdered by a sergeant of marines, when she interrupted herself by pointing to a great redness in the sky.

"Look ; there must be a fire in the town !" she exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, woman ; what do I care ? Drive on, drive on," he answered impatiently.

"What do you mean ? Have you murdered someone that you should be in such haste ?"

The old woman pulled up her horse and looked at him fearfully.

"No, no ; I beg your pardon, but I want to get past the sentries on the lines. I will tell you the truth. I was pressed two days ago, and have escaped from the receiving ship. I have a widowed mother living on the other side of Portsdown, and I am escaping to her."

"Oh, that's it, is it ?" she laughed. "Well, why didn't you say so at first ? I'll get you past the sentries safe enough ; there's none of us here have any love for the press-gang, I can tell you."

They were at Hilsea Lines, the landward boundary on the London Road of the Portsmouth line of fortifications.

"Lie down in the bottom of the cart, and keep your tongue still," said the old woman.

Then, as they drove through the archway and over the bridge crossing the moat, the sentry stepped from his box, and said :

"Good-night, mother. Where's the fire, do you know?"

"No; there was no fire when I left town," answered the old woman carelessly.

"It's a big one, anyhow," said the man. "Good-night."

The whole guard was out on the rampart, looking at the red sky, and black pillars of smoke rising towards it, and they all asked questions, but the old woman drove on, and Jack the Painter, lying at the bottom of the cart, remained undiscovered.

When they came to the village of Cosham the old woman pointed out her little cottage, with its market garden, the London Road running past it over Portsdown.

Hill looked at the hill and shuddered. Then he wished her hurriedly good-night, and handing her a coin, began to ascend the hill. When he reached its summit, four hundred feet below him stretched the

scattered houses of the little villages which lie at the foot of Portsdown, and north, east, and west, the dark shadows of the Hampshire and Sussex woods stood out in the starlight, reminding him of what lay hidden in Catherington Forest.

But to the south there was a great light, subduing altogether the twinkling lights of Portsmouth town. This great blaze and the thick column of smoke rising beside it was the fire. His fire! He looked at it for several minutes, then laughed aloud, and rubbed his hands, and threw his arms about, pacing to and fro the road on the crest of the hill the while to get a better view of it. When the flames now and again seemed to go down, his spirits fell with them, and he stopped and muttered curses. But the fire kept its strength for longer than he thought prudent to look upon it, and after gloating over his work for half an hour, he went on his way down the hill, taking care to choose the Fareham road, which lies far to the west of Catherington Forest.

CHAPTER XIV

FIRE

THE bulk of the workmen had filed out through the main entrance, and the warden and his porters were about to close the great gates, and shut the Yard for the night, when stragglers, if they came along, or officials who wanted egress or ingress, would have to pass through the little doorway, which, after nightfall, was guarded by a marine sentry and a night watchman. The latter was seventy years of age, wooden-legged, one-armed, and by no means lynx-eyed. One of these great doors was swinging upon its hinges when the alarm went up from someone.

None knew who first uttered the word, but in a moment it flew from mouth to mouth, and the cry of "Fire!" became a chorus. Outside the gates the homeward bound men caught it, and it flew along the crowd as the fire itself was flying through the doomed rope house. Halting suddenly for an instant of time, the men stood still, then grasping

the meaning of the cry, a frantic body, a thousand strong, turned about and rushed headlong back to the Yard. The half-shut doors were hurled open; the gatekeepers, losing their heads with the rest, and throwing themselves into the returning tide, were swept inwards towards the fire.

Across almost the whole width of the Yard they saw a low, red glow, not high in the air yet—for it was still confined by the thick central floor of the building, and cloaked by the heavy pall of smoke that poured out of the rows of ventilators, but its fierceness was so intensified by this, that the man of least imagination among them all saw and took in at once what a raging furnace was imprisoned there.

As the mob poured in through the gate and on toward the fire, only checked in their approach to it by the scorching heat, its choking, blinding fumes and smoke—the vapour of burning hemp and boiling tar—the marines and sailors from the ships alongside the dock, and the officials of the Yard, heard the rush of the crowd, and saw for themselves what had happened, and so from inside the dock wall, and from the ships in the harbour, more excited people came to swell the crowd,

Meaningless cries and useless directions in plenty came from individuals, but no intelligible orders were given by these people, and in no man among them was the master mind to collect these atoms of human force and concentrate them upon the one thing needful then. You cannot, unless you have a rare man, make an army of a mob, and excited dockyard mateys cannot be converted in a moment—the moment of danger—into a fire brigade. Meantime, the precious minutes flew, and the red glow was beginning to be crowned with yellow as the flames burst through upper storey windows and loft doorways. The flames were creeping outside up the wood-work, feeding upon it, and gaining strength, until they met across the roof, where the wind, blowing gently upon them, fanned them into vigour, and they began to stretch towards the hemp house.

“Bring water. Pass buckets. Where’s the engines? Why don’t they come? Does the Commissioner know? Where is he?”

Such questions the crowd yelled to one another, doing little else but yelling for the first few minutes after the outbreak. Then Mr. Commissioner

Gambier came upon the scene, and he proved himself upon that night the man among them all best fitted to control the King's Dockyard—a charge no less important to England's Navy than her Navy was to England. The yelling crowd had not heard the beat of drums in the marine guard-house, and the ringing of bells; had not seen the Commissioner from the steps of his house five minutes before quietly give orders that set these alarms going, that sent messengers for the engines and for help to the ships, to the garrison, to the whole town. And now, while the excited mob was making noise and doing nothing useful, the engines arrived and the clank of the pump began, worked by men too flurried to know by what means they had got there.

But only the inside rows of the crowd knew this, for the paltry streams of water fell upon the flames with no more effect upon them than a shower would have from the rose of the Commissioner's garden watering-pot; and Mr. Gambier, seeing this, was steadily organising little parties, not to fight the fire in its stronghold, but to resist its advances.

The rope house was lost, the hemp house in grave

danger, but carpenters' shops, tar and pitch stores, sail lofts, rigging house, were still safe, although perilously near to the flames. So Gambier, with the judgment that one has no right to expect from a man of his time, and only looks for in a Shaw or his successors, gave to the fire all the ground it had won. Gradually, by quietly issuing his orders in person and appointing lieutenants to see them carried out, he increased his force of men, and employed them profitably passing buckets of water from the sea to the fire or working pump handles.

By this time two big detachments of the military had been marched into the Yard, marines and soldiers from the garrison; and the troops supplied what even the sailors lacked, the machine-like discipline that comes only from the work of the drill sergeant and the parade ground. But what the sailors wanted in discipline they made up for in energy, and one sailor to a pump handle set a pace to work it by that even the Yard blacksmiths could not stand for long. And besides this, while the soldier officers only gave dignified orders to their men to "right face" here, or to "left turn" there, the naval officers, followed by their men, climbed into all

sorts of impossible places, carrying buckets of water in each hand, where landsmen would have needed both hands to hold on by.

The skill and pluck of the sailors was now of great advantage, for they scrambled about the roofs of the buildings, dowsing the red-hot lumps of hemp that were being showered upon the adjacent stores, blown thither by the breeze as it caught them up from the mass of fire now open to the sky, for by now the roof had fallen in. Then the flames thus released, shot aloft to such a height that the whole harbour was lit up, and the rigging and the yards of the ships could be seen crowded with men, and the water with boats full of people gazing upon the blaze.

The sharp words of command, and the rattle of the soldiers' firelocks on the cobble stones, as they were halted and dressed in sections until they made a circle round the fire, acted as a tonic upon the nerves of the Dockyardmen, and soon the mateys were steady enough to hear the quiet voice of the Commissioner issuing orders or giving words of encouragement.

"Now, my lads," he would say, "move that pump

farther along here. A fresh party of men for this engine." Or else it would be, "Come, pass along the buckets. You are very slow, my men, and if you're not quicker, the whole Yard will be burned, and there'll be no Christmas dinner for some of you."

That question of bread and butter was, outside the Yard walls, what was most agitating the townsfolk, who, in the something less than an hour that had passed, had gathered in thousands, no one among them an unmoved or unconcerned spectator—for the opening of the Yard gates every morning, and the regular recurrence of the clerk of the cheques' pay day, was as needful to their existence as sunrise.

As soon as the alarm gained the town, the people flocked from everywhere to Portsmouth Common and along the Hard. But the Lieutenant Governor had promptly closed all the town gates, shutting in upon the Common all those who had reached it, and keeping out others. Every regiment was under arms, and a cordon of soldiers was drawn round the dock wall outside, cutting off the crowd from approach to the gates. By this means

the people were divided, those who were in the Yard fighting the flames, those, mostly the families of the mateys, shut inside upon the Common, and the townsfolk of Portsmouth. The spectators thus covered ground inside the fortifications from the Sluice Bastion, near where Holy Trinity Church now stands, to the King's Mill Redoubt, and outside the ramparts from Halfway Houses to Southsea Beach, taking possession of every high point from whence they could obtain a glimpse of the flames ; and Blockhouse Point, Gosport Hard, and Portsmouth Point were black with people, while watermen's wherries, loaded till gunwales were awash, were driving a roaring trade by carrying folks at a penny a head to view the blaze from the water.

All these people were the men and women of old Portsmouth, and no matter what manner of fire breaks out nowadays, no crowd in the least resembling them will assemble to look upon it. They have departed with the old three-deckers, their canvas, their hemp, their prize money ; and the earthen walls of the town have gone the way of the wooden walls in the harbour. The ship-

breakers' yard for the old hulks; earth to earth with the ramparts, levelled to a people's park, the cannon that once frowned through their embrasures, now grotesquely stuck on end to make chain posts for macadamised pathways, half in, half out the ground, not even decently buried.

The coming of the steam-driven floating iron fort and its very respectable bluejacket garrison meant the going of the old seaport population, and Mr. Advance-note Isaacs has disappeared, and with him Poll and Bet and Sue, who have given way perhaps to much less objectionable people.

But on this night, a hundred and thirty years ago, the great crowd, barring the wives of the mateys, had mighty few "respectable" elements in it, and when the people hustled one another and quarrelled or jested, they talked in a language not understood by Board School scholars—at least, it is supposed not.

Mrs. Mildwater and other poor but honest folk stood and watched the blaze, and talked of the fires of '60 and '70, when the Yard was each time almost entirely burned to the ground, and people

all well knew "'twas the French had done it, although the Government did try to make out that 'twas the hot weather and the lightning."

"But we ain't at war now with the French, and it's cold enough, the Lord knows! It's jest some good-for-nothing journeyman rope-maker bin smoking."

This was the general opinion of the crowd, not hasty and suspicious in its judgment—where the French were not concerned, though it was true that most of them agreed that war or no war, the French were likely enough at the bottom of it.

But it was comforting to think that ships must be built and repaired. In the previous fires the Government had actually taken on more men, and after all, perhaps they would get it under before long, for it was not so bright, the smoke was getting thicker, and there was less flame.

Thus talked the honest women in the crowd—the women in the plain stuff dresses, decent white aprons, and home-knitted shawls over their heads, the women whose arms pressed tighter to their hearts an infant, or whose hands trembled as they held those of their little ones and thought of what father

was doing inside the Yard—whether the supper growing cold upon the kitchen hob might ever now be eaten, for it is dangerous work for men to climb about on burning buildings.

It was hard for these mothers to listen to the jibes of Poll and Bet and Sue, who chaffed each other, and talked at honest women, asking such questions as, "I wonder now how these landlubbers' wives like their men to be under fire? No matey's ever bin so close to a blaze afore. There'll be no pay for 'em now."

Such talk from husseys in all manner of fine colours and fal-lals is hard to bear, and there were many quarrels, when women with their arms akimbo exchanged compliments in lower deck language, now not understood if printed.

There were men of all conditions, too. Rascals of all sorts, and men who had been in hiding in fear of the press, turned out that night and mingled freely with the crowd, knowing well that the sailors had something else to do besides searching the beer-shops for them, while in the town itself, sneak thieves and ruffians of all kinds made a glorious harvest from the unprotected houses.

But when the blaze was at its fiercest, and the kindler of it standing upon Portsdown looked across and saw how well he had done his work, he had not counted upon Mr. Commissioner Gambier; and the Commissioner was at that very time proving himself a match for Mr. John Hill.

The Yard workmen had every man of them by this time been set properly to work, each to do his part under his particular foreman in fighting the fire. The doomed rope house was left to its fate, and the fire burned merrily its own way inside, making a tremendous blaze, of course, and sending forth showers of fire flakes, which fell in all directions upon the other Yard buildings, to be disposed of very quickly by the active sailors.

The Commissioner, with the Port Admiral and the Lieutenant-Governor, stood calmly watching all that was going on, and quietly giving his orders; and his words could be heard quite easily, for the rattle of the pump handles and the roar of the fire were all there was to drown them, so well had he got his men in hand—they were quiet.

The soldiers had been extended all round the Yard on its water side to guard against the water

thieves, who, Mr. Gambier knew very well, would not neglect such an opportunity, and from this line of redcoats there were regular rows of men passing water to the sailors on the roofs. In a couple of hours all danger to the rest of the Yard was over, and the fire now appeared—through the open sides and unroofed building—as one long, dull red bar across the Yard, with a fringe of lighter red flame at the top, and above that again spurts of yellow and fountains of sparks continually burst forth. Inside, the roaring furnace was curiously varied at places where big ropes still had life enough in them to hold together, and they hung in burning festoons until one after another they were burnt out and fell into the glowing furnace below. But by ten o'clock that night it was practically all over, and the mateys were sent to their homes with orders to be back at daybreak to clear away the ruins, while the sailors and soldiers continued through the night at the work of pouring water on the embers.

At Portchester they had seen the fire; the sentry duly reported it to Lieutenant Stockleigh when the flames first shot skywards, and that officer, seeing what a big blaze it was, called the Governor, who

agreed that it must be in the Dockyard or mighty near thereto, and Captain Bagshott considered that he ought to do something. So he gave the order to beat to quarters. Then, dividing his garrison, he sent half of it under Stockleigh, and accompanied by the surgeon, in boats to the Dockyard, keeping the other half under arms in the keep guard-room.

He himself walked about on the top of the high tower until midnight, when the veterans returned, and Stockleigh reported that the Port Admiral, when they arrived, told them to go home again and go to bed, but he was much obliged all the same.

Dolly, too, watched the fire from the castle ramparts, and the Governor's daughter on the whole was glad of its happening, for she thought it might divert her father from that other more personal trouble.

CHAPTER XV

"TAKEN OUT OF ORDINARY"

THANKS to Commissioner Gambier, nothing had come of it all; the Dockyard was at work again, and this, the third great fire within twenty years, was the least destructive. True, the rope walk and many tons weight and pounds worth of rope had been destroyed, but this was all the damage done, and this time the French—if the French were responsible—were farther off than ever from damaging the British Navy.

The men were all busy again the very morning after the fire, and in less than a week the ropemakers had made themselves temporary rope walks, and the work of rigging and fitting out the ships was not seriously impeded by the disaster. The nine days had come to an end, and the wonder and talk and speculation had died out, when something happened to revive it

all, and one of the first persons to be concerned in this revival was the Governor of Portchester Castle.

Matters were not going pleasantly in Captain Bagshott's small family. For three or four days after Mr. Henry Warner's disappearance Dolly went cheerfully enough about her household duties, holding her head high, her demeanour as became one who was about by incontestable evidence to prove her superior wisdom. But when a fifth—a sixth day—a week, passed, and no Mr. Warner appeared, free to come or to go, and to claim the hand of a trusting girl, triumphant over the unjust suspicions of a well-intentioned, but very prejudiced, though dearly-loved old father—when Mr. Warner neither appeared or even sent a message, then Dolly's fortitude, after passing through all the stages from absolute certainty to slight misgivings on to grave doubts and fears, and then to utter despair, gave way altogether.

Of course her heart was broken—or she thought it was. First, she had comforted herself with the belief that Warner had met with obstacles to clearing his good name; that a day one way or the

other was not much, and London was about eighty miles from Portchester—but then, why did he not send a message? But when the eighth day had passed, and no word came, the girl's Spanish castle, never anything but a shaky structure from the time when its foundation was first laid, tottering for a week, fell to pieces, and with it Dolly's pride and confidence in herself.

Her father no longer treated her as a spoilt child. He had dropped the subject of their dispute from the day of his visit to the Admiral, and although he kissed Dolly good-night and good-morning, and was always quite gentle and kind to her, yet that something had come between them was plain to everyone, and the official sternness of the old man now never relaxed in Dolly's presence.

Dr. Brand was having a particularly bad time of it. The Governor treated him with the most distant politeness, intimating immediately after the American's escape that the backgammon evenings were at an end, and in future their intercourse must be confined to official matters. The surgeon in consequence found himself thrown upon his own resources—his books—in the dismal little

room that formed his quarters. Once or twice Brand had endeavoured to talk to Dolly, but the girl's pride was strong enough to resent his sympathy, and she, cut off from her father, wrapped her sorrow within her breast, and grew gradually to imagine that her heart was broken.

Hour after hour Dolly lay awake at night and thought of it all, alternately reviling herself for having so readily given her love to a man so base as to use her in such fashion, or finding reasons for the American's silence, and endeavouring to persuade herself that all would yet come well. Christmas was coming, and the thought of former Christmas days, before Mr. Warner had upset the peace of the castle, was beginning to make Dolly feel like ending it all. When a week had gone the girl, after a whole night of mental torture, made up her mind to give in, to go to her father and beg him to forgive her, for what remained of her heart was his entirely now, and he must take her back to him, or she would die of grief.

And so, full of this idea, despite her broken heart, she had rehearsed a little scene before coming to breakfast, and unconsciously was looking forward

to playing a very affecting part in a touching domestic drama.

She entered the room, to find her father was busy getting into his best uniform coat ; the Admiral had sent a messenger, desiring his immediate attendance, and a boat was waiting for him. Captain Bagshott was not a man for even his daughter to become sentimental with when the Admiral's boat was waiting for him, and so Dolly wistfully kissed him good-bye, and postponed that affecting scene between them until he should return.

The old man got into the boat without any misgivings this time. The Port Admiral had probably sent for him to thank him for despatching that half company of veterans to the fire ; or else, perhaps, that infernal American had cleared his character and himself out of the country, and the whole of that bother was ended.

The Admiral's secretary was waiting for him in the ante-room.

"Ah, Captain Bagshott," he said, "the Admiral is anxiously expecting you ; there's something in the wind, sir, and I was ordered to show you in at once."

The Governor was accordingly ushered into the Admiral's office, and the Admiral, the moment he saw him, said :

"Take a seat, Captain Bagshott. I want to see you particularly." Then he nodded to the secretary, who went out and closed the door behind him.

The Admiral faced about in his chair, and looking old Bagshott squarely in the face, said :

"I want to know, sir, if you have heard anything more of that prisoner who escaped from your command?"

The Governor of Portchester attached no importance to the sharp tone of the question, but thought it was some pleasant humour of the Admiral's.

"No, sir, of course not. I have made no attempt to discover the man; you will remember we had some conversation in which you attributed no importance to—"

"Never mind that now, Captain Bagshott. I ask you, has the man returned, or communicated with the castle since he left it?"

The Admiral was very much in earnest, there could be no doubt of it, and Bagshott rose from his

chair, his grey old head bowed meekly before his superior, and answered :

"No, sir, certainly not."

"Was there not some love affair between your daughter and this man? You told me some yarn of that kind."

The Admiral put the question as if he were a cross-examining counsel, and Bagshott had some difficulty in preserving his self-control as he replied :

"I told you, sir, that unfortunately my daughter had so far forgotten herself as to have aided in some way this man's escape ; he has taken advantage of her youth and inexperience, and my stupidity thus far, but—"

"Quite so ; but has there been no communication between them since—nothing by which we could trace him?"

"I am quite certain there has not, sir," said the old man eagerly. "My daughter has now discovered her folly, I am sure, and—"

The Admiral impatiently interrupted him :

"Yes, yes, no doubt ; but this man must be found, do you hear? Your daughter must at once tell us everything. Go back and get to work with her ;

drag out of her everything that passed between them. Don't let her make a fool of you again ; a girl like that ought to be kept a tight hand over."

Captain Bagshott grew very red in the face, and his old shoulders stiffened.

"Nothing passed between them, sir, but what I have told you. My daughter is incapable of—"

"Of course, of course," returned the Admiral hastily. "But all the same the man must be found, and I hold you responsible for finding him."

"Be it so, sir ; but I venture to remind you that I took the full responsibility for his escape when a week ago I came here and told you what had happened, and you then answered me with a laugh—that the matter was of no moment—that it was a good thing—that, politically, it was the best thing that could have happened—that—"

There was a passionate pleading in the old man's voice. He was fighting for his honour and his name, and his fifty years of unsullied service.

"Quite true, Captain Bagshott, quite true ; but Portsmouth Dockyard had not then been set on fire."

"No, sir, it had not ; and what has my neglect

of my prisoner to do with the burning of the rope house?"

"This, Captain Bagshott. Your prisoner, your daughter's lover is—there is very little doubt—the man who set fire to it."

The old man stood very quietly for a moment, and his wrinkled face twitched as he muttered:

"Of course, sir, there is evidence of this, and of course I am held indirectly responsible?"

The Admiral softened his tone a little.

"Look here, Bagshott, I cannot explain to you everything relating to this business, but the fire occurred the night after this man's escape, and we have made discoveries, and have received reports which make it practically certain that he was the infernal villain."

"And my responsibility is of course admitted, sir," the brave voice faltered. "Do with me whatever is right; I acknowledge that fully."

"Well, you know, Captain Bagshott," said the Admiral, "that circumstances alter cases. Now, don't for a moment imagine that I am angry with you, but something must be done; the man must be found. Your daughter, you know—"

"My daughter, sir, will suffer anything that should be suffered by any other woman who has acted in like manner to her," said the old man proudly. "But for myself—for myself—you will be pleased to report to the Government of me—for my neglect, of my utter unfitness for such a charge. I have no answer to make. Whatever may be decided upon will be accepted without question by me. I have been in ordinary too long, and an old hulk like me is only fit for breaking up."

"Oh, something will have to be done, of course, but I won't make it hotter for you than I can help, for old acquaintance' sake, you know. Look here, Bagshott, go back now, and see if your daughter can help us in any way, and come and see me again to-morrow."

The old man bowed, and taking up his hat, turned towards the door. It was early morning, the sun was shining, and his eyesight was that of a sailor's, wanting no spectacles; yet, as he went out, he groped his way along. His wrinkled old hands, trembling, touched the wall of the passage as he made towards the door, his feet stumbling

upon the steps of the house. So he passed out, brushing by the secretary, the callers in the waiting-room, the sentry, seeing none of them.

Fifty years of getting in and out of boats made the work an instinct with him, so that he made his way to the stern sheets of the waterman's wherry without accident. Sitting bolt upright, grasping the yoke lines firmly, steering perfectly, he took the boat up the harbour.

The boat landed him on the beach at Portchester. With the touch of his feet upon the land his steadiness left him again, and he staggered into the castle to his room, saying only to the servant as he passed her :

"Send my daughter to me."

The old serving-woman looked at him, and was frightened. She ran hurriedly for her young mistress, saying :

"The Governor is upset, Mistress Dolly, and he wants you ; go quickly !"

Dolly ran in from the kitchen, and found him sitting very upright, his hands crossed upon his walking-stick, staring straight before him, with a

strange, stern look, his face showing curious shadows upon it.

"Father, father, what is it?" she cried. "What is the matter? you are ill. Oh, my dear, my dear! What has happened?"

"Yes; it is you."

His voice was stranger than his look, and Dolly had no conception of its meaning. Knowing as yet nothing of the tragedies of life, she did not comprehend, having only a vague fear.

"Yes, yes, my dearest father; what is it? Oh, forgive me; I was coming to you before you went away this morning. Tell me that you forgive me! I was wrong."

"My fault," he murmured, "my fault—no mother—you are not to blame."

"Father, you are ill—tell me what has happened?"

She was at his knees, and moved away the stick his hands were resting upon, so that the whole weight of his body was borne upon her slender shoulders. But she, holding him thus in her arms, felt not that in the greater weight that had come upon her heart.

"All well, Dolly—don't cry—good girl—ended now—shock too much for an old hulk like me."

They came running in, in answer to the girl's cries for help—the servant, Stockleigh, Brand—but the only help they could give was to lighten the burden on Dolly's shoulders. The weight on her heart grew heavier when, as they lay the old man on the floor, the sunlight from the cottage window showed still darkening and darker shadows on his face.

"My number's hoisted, and I'll slip my cable soon. Keep an eye on Dolly. Con her steering; it's a little wild, like mine is now. Do you hear me, Brand?"

Thus the old man, so long laid up in ordinary, cut adrift, not to toss again upon life's stormy sea.

And Brand made solemn answer to Dolly's mute appeal:

"It is death, my girl; it is death."

CHAPTER XVI

DR. BRAND SETS TO WORK

FOR Dolly playtime was over. Dispelled were the sweet fancies of her girlhood; dreamland was now to give place to the earnestness of life—to womanhood. And the new epoch began in Parson Bramber's home, the last place a week earlier that Dolly would have sought for consolation in time of trouble.

Miss Bramber and Miss Bagshott used to love one another as Christians sometimes do, because it is their duty, and for no other reason, for Parson Bramber's sister was a spinster, old and very prim. The week after her father's burial, Dolly, from beneath her swollen eyelids, began to look out upon the world again. She found herself an inmate of the vicarage, and this old lady whispering words of comfort in her ears, and altogether behaving in such a fashion that the girl no longer

recognised the grim old maid, but found in her a second mother,

Sitting in the parson's best parlour, the old lady in an arm-chair by the fire, Dolly on a footstool by her side, her head on Miss Bramber's lap, the wrinkled old hand smoothing Dolly's pale cheek—this was how Dr. Brand found them when he was shown in.

The old lady liked the surgeon, she having no suspicion of his radical sympathies, he having no wish to thrust them upon her, conceiving (incredible as it may appear in this age of advertisement) that other people had no longing to know his sentiments. Therefore, Dr. Brand was welcomed, and the old lady, taking the opportunity of his coming to go about some household business, left him to talk to Dolly.

"Miss Bagshott," said the doctor, "I am glad to see you alone, and well enough, I hope, to have some little talk with me upon a painful subject."

"I am quite ready to talk if it is necessary, doctor. Owing to your kind thoughtfulness, and to all you have done for me, I am here now. I had always misjudged dear Miss Bramber, and

you, knowing her, brought me here. That I am able to speak of my dear father without entirely break—breaking down—is owing to this dear old lady.”

Then Dolly did break down, and cried a little, but soon looked up again cheerfully in the doctor's face, waiting for him to speak.

“Well, the fact is, Miss Bagshott—”

“Dolly, doctor ; why not Dolly ?”

Brand hesitated a great deal, evidently finding it difficult to put into words what he had to say.

“The fact is, Miss Dolly, I don't want to talk of your poor father, but of other and more painful matters.”

“Surely not, doctor ; there is, I hope, no need—no fresh trouble to be talked about ?”

“Your future must be considered. I must tell you that your father has left a little money—enough for you to remain quite comfortably here, and the vicar will accept through me some small payment out of your estate for your lodging. I have arranged all that, and if you will leave the business in my hands, I will invest your little fortune, so that you need have no trouble.”

"Yes, yes, doctor ; it is very good of you. I cannot thank you enough."

"No need for that. Of course a lawyer might be employed, but unless you wish this to be done, I think it is not worth while to deliver yourself into the hands of any rascal of that kind. I am quoting your father now, and believe me, he was right on the subject of lawyers."

It seemed then that it would be half the battle if Dolly could do without a lawyer, and Brand sighed in relief when she answered :

"My father was always right ; but the trouble—"

"Never mind that. And now I come to a more painful subject, on which your father was, perhaps, not quite right ; there is very likely some mistake. Forgive me for touching upon this, but I must tell you—don't be annoyed with me—I must refer to Mr. Warner."

The doctor looked straight at Dolly as he pronounced the American's name.

"Very well, doctor ; I would rather not talk of that—that—the discovery, the—the—"

Although Dolly hesitated in her speech, she was

not half so confused as Brand expected her to be at the mention of Warner.

"Yes, Dolly, forgive me, but it is all very doubtful. Your father was, I think, misled by the Admiral. I am quite sure in my own mind that Warner did not set fire to the Yard."

"I try to believe that, doctor; but almost the last words of my father were a warning to me, and—and—besides, where is he? Why has he not come back?"

"There is some mistake, and I am determined to clear it up. If—if it should turn out that your father was right—try to bear the news; but I have hopes to bring you good tidings when I come back."

"No, doctor, don't talk of it. It is all ended now. Believe me, I desire never more to hear or speak of the—the—of this Warner."

Brand looked hard at the girl. He thought her a little hasty in believing the worst of the young man.

"Very well, Miss Dolly," he said, "but I must tell you I have had an interview with the Admiral, and I have obtained a month's leave. In that time you

will see I shall have cleared up the mystery, and I am sure you will welcome me if I bring you good news."

"Come back yourself, doctor, and bring me no news. I am sure you can do nothing; my father's words and Mr. Warner's long absence, and besides—and besides—I don't want—want—to hear anyone—and it is very cruel of you to remind me—and—and—" Bursting into tears, Dolly held out her hand to the doctor. "Forgive me, I don't mean to be cross; but don't let us talk of this."

"Forgive me, Miss Bagshott, and we will not talk of it. I am going now, and we will say no more until I come back. I will see the parson and Miss Bramber, and say good-bye to her; she won't mind me going to her kitchen. Stay you here, and I beg you will not mention to Miss Bramber the last subject of our interview."

Then the doctor shook hands with Dolly and went away. At the back of the house he found Miss Bramber.

"My dear madam," he said, "I am going away now. Miss Bagshott seems quite recovered, and I hope soon to set everything to rights."

"Did you arrange with her about her money—her so-called estate?" the old lady asked. "I do wish it had not been necessary to resort to even a partial untruth."

"Yes, yes, Miss Bramber; she understands that her father left her something, and I have merely avoided telling her how much. I hope you will believe that I am incapable of more than just the very least departure from fact."

"I believe, Dr. Brand, that you are a gentleman," said the old lady. "I hope you took my advice, and did not return to that very unfortunate affair between her and the rebel."

The doctor smiled :

"Madam, I would not dream of referring to it after my conversation with you a day or two ago. That is to say, I just mentioned the matter incidentally, in connection with something else."

The old lady shook her curls as she answered :

"You know very well, Dr. Brand, that this painful incident is the one objection I had to having the poor girl here; and if I were not perfectly certain that this dreadful villain had not taken advantage of the girl's youth, and that we shall not hear of the

rebel again, unless as a prisoner, I should never be able to get the better of my objection."

"Quite so, madam, but perhaps we shall presently find that the rebel who escaped from the castle is not the man who set fire to the Yard, though I hope that you will understand that I do not justify Mr. Warner's rebellious conduct."

"It would be impossible to justify it, sir. One form of rebellion is as bad as another."

Then Miss Bramber said good-bye to the doctor and went back to Dolly, and called her a poor dear motherless girl, patted her cheek, and cried with her, and became altogether a very different old lady.

The surgeon was by no means so sanguine as he had pretended to be about Mr. Warner's innocence; but those keen eyes of his had penetrated deeper into Dolly's mind than she herself suspected, and he knew well that the death of her father and the absence of Warner were sorrows that Dolly's tears fell freely for, and while a woman weeps there is no danger. But that the handsome young American was nothing but a hired incendiary was a hideous thought for Dolly to brood over,

which Brand determined must be driven away at any cost. But could he clear the man? If not—the doctor looked very grim indeed at the thought.

Warner, Brand imagined, was either returned to France, or in hiding in London. On the night of his escape from the castle it was more than likely a boat had been waiting for him, and taken him across at once; but then the fire?

Brand had seen the Admiral, as he had told Dolly, but he had not told her what the Admiral had shown him.

Very much shocked to hear of Bagshott's death, the Admiral had been quite confidential with the surgeon.

"I spoke sharply to him," said the great man, "but I had no idea that he took it so much to heart. Dear me! Dear me! Yes, he was a very old man, of course, and apoplectic, Dr. Brand, you say? Well, of course that would account for it."

"Are we convinced that Warner set fire to the Yard?" he went on, in reply to Brand's suggestion that there was a doubt. "Well, I don't mind telling you what we have discovered since. I, of

course, know his lordship is a distant connection of yours, and that you are asking me for leave that you may visit him." Then the Admiral went to a cupboard, where he kept important papers, and took out of it a tin canister, with a piece of candle in it. "Do you see that? That was discovered in the hemp house, hidden in a ball of hemp, a few days ago, when they were clearing up the wet hemp. What do you make of it?"

The doctor took the tin in his hand and examined it, and understood its meaning; but Mrs. Mildwater, if it had been shown to her, would have understood better.

"Yes, I see, sir," he said; "this is part of some apparatus for setting fire to the building."

"Quite so. Before they found this, we thought the French were at the bottom of the business, but we have persistently pretended that it was an accident, to gull the rascals into the idea that we did not suspect them. However, the people in London know all about it, and presently we have hopes of getting the man."

"What man, sir? Are you sure of him?"

"What man!" the Admiral spoke sharply.

"Why, as I said before, the fellow who escaped from Portchester, of course. There is no doubt of it. First we had information of his coming, then a watchman remembered a man being locked up in the hemp house on some night which was just about the time of his escape, then the fire breaks out. The whole thing is plain."

"Very plain, as you say, sir," assented Brand, and then bowed his way out from the Admiral's room, saying that he would hire a horse and depart on his way to London to see that distinguished patron of his.

"Remember me to his lordship," said the Admiral, following him to the door, "and tell him that we are leaving no stone unturned here to discover the villain. You are fortunate, Dr. Brand, in having such a powerful friend at court."

"Oh, very," replied the doctor, as he walked to the door. "As you know, I owe my present valuable appointment to his good offices."

But the doctor did not go off in the direction of the London Road. Instead, he made his way to Chapel Row, and knocked at Mrs. Mildwater's door,

"Do you remember me, ma'am?" he asked that good woman.

"No, sir; but Mildwas is at work, and perhaps it was him you was wanting?"

"If you have no objection I will come inside; I should like to have some talk with you privately."

"Yes, sir."

Mrs. Mildwater seemed very frightened, as she dusted the best chairs with her apron. She had a subdued air, and her state of nervous expectancy was noticed by the surgeon, who smiled a little grimly at her, and she was sure that at last the blow was about to fall.

For days her Mildwas and herself had been in fear and trembling. It began with certain rumours after the fire broke out. At first everyone said it was the French; then the Commissioner set that yarn at rest. He spoke to several people about the fire, and was very affable, telling them how he had made a discovery. It was not the French this time, but one of the men, who had been seen smoking, and as they were unable to discover the smoker, there was no more to be said, except that people ought to be thankful that it was no worse. But it would

be a bad thing for anyone he caught smoking in the Yard.

Everyone was glad the matter was settled, and particularly glad were Mr. and Mrs. Mildwater, who, two or three days after the fire, began to wonder if Jack the Painter was not coming back for his bundle. Soon, unconfessed to each other, they felt misgivings. Mildwater remembered that the painter had been lurking about the Yard a great deal, also that he sometimes expressed very strange sentiments, and that he had been among the rebels. Recollecting these things, the ropemaker feared that poeple would also bear in mind that he had introduced the painter to the Yard.

Mrs. Mildwater thought on her late lodger's irregular hours, his unusually sullen demeanour, and on that experiment in chemistry which had so nearly set her house on fire ; and thinking of these things, she had told her Mildwas that for their own safety it would be very wise for him to keep a still tongue in his head. But for a while the Commissioner's easy way of taking the business had reassured them both, and as the neighbours did not bother their heads as to what had become of the

painter, whose bundle still waited for him in the little room, the Mildwaters' misgivings were dying out.

But a day or two before Brand's visit a rumour was afloat ; something had been discovered by one of the men in the hemp house. The Commissioner was sent for, and he had told the men present if any word of their discovery got known before he made it public, he would dismiss them all. But such a discovery could not be kept entirely secret ; vague stories floated about, and Mildwater and his wife did not sleep at nights.

Mrs. Mildwater then, showing the doctor into her best parlour, concluded that he was a Bow Street officer ; for Bow Street officers from London, it was known, were in the town looking for the incendiary—and that there had been an incendiary was beginning to be believed.

"Ah, you don't remember me? Well, so much the better," remarked the visitor mysteriously.

Mrs. Mildwater only shook her head. She was too frightened to trust herself to speak, but inwardly determined to make a clean breast of it, for after all, she reasoned, it was not intentional.

She had not knowingly harboured the enemy, and perhaps Mildwater's foolishness in taking him about the Yard was not known.

"I want to ask you who that man was who was lodging here three weeks ago. Of course he is not here now; where is he, and what do you know of him?"

The doctor looked very stern as he put the questions.

Her worst fears were confirmed, and the visitor was a Bow Street officer she thought.

"He has gone away, sir; I don't know where," she managed to utter.

"Yes, of course; the night of the fire." Brand looked serious.

"Indeed, sir, we know nothing of the man. He came to us a stranger, wanting work, and said he was a painter, and—and—" But Mrs. Mildwater broke down, and the rest of her words were muffled in her apron, as she held it to her eyes and burst out weeping.

The doctor assumed that air which has so much to do with successful practice in his profession.

"Look here, my good woman," he said, "there

is no need to be frightened. All I want is for you to tell me the whole truth. No harm will come to you or your husband if you do that. When did the man leave your house on that night?"

Then Mrs. Mildwater, with many protestations of the innocence of herself and her husband, told all she knew, and in proof of the painter's disappearance, mentioned that his bundle was still hidden away under the bed in the room he had occupied, the character of her last lodger having frightened her out of attempting to relet the room.

"A bundle, eh?" said the visitor. "I must see that; bring it here."

It was brought, and the doctor very thoroughly overhauled its contents. Then he made a bargain with Mrs. Mildwater. She was to take care that neither her husband or herself disclosed to anyone their suspicions, and no one must know of the bundle's existence.

"If you keep your own counsel in the matter," said Brand, "no harm will come to you. I am going to London now to see the authorities, and will clear you; but if you open your mouths

about the business we shall probably miss our man, and, by George, I'll lodge the pair of you in gaol if I find that you have been the cause of it!"

CHAPTER XVII

DR. BRAND SOLVES THE MYSTERY

DR. BRAND set out on horseback for London. He was well mounted, but his horse carried a valise of clothing, and in the doctor's pockets were a case of instruments, without which he never travelled, and a heavy horse pistol, so that although he proceeded at a good pace, it was late in the afternoon when he rode into the town of Petersfield. Being poor in purse—all the poorer since Dolly had come into that small estate of hers—he chose the old White Hart to sleep in for the night, passing by the Castle Inn, where Pepys used to stay when he made his journeys from London to inspect Portsmouth Yard, and where he tells us "we were very merry and played with our wives at bowles."

The little town used to wake up once a fort-

night, on market day, and it was the surgeon's chance to arrive upon that day to find the tavern crowded with noisy farmers, and most of the bedrooms engaged. The landlord apologised for offering such poor accommodation to a gentleman travelling, and went on to explain that the only room available was close to that occupied by a sick man (in case the gentleman should discover by the doctor's visits that he was such close neighbours with a sick person). The landlord hoped he would not be nervous; it was not a disease of any kind, but a man who had been wounded.

"I am scarcely likely to be nervous of sickness in any shape, good sir, for I am a surgeon by profession; and further, I only want the room for a night, as I am on my way to London," said Brand, in reply to all these excuses.

The host lost interest in his guest at once—anything was good enough for a traveller who only wanted to stay one night; and so Brand was handed over to a chambermaid to be shown his room.

When he came downstairs, the farmers were noisily enjoying their supper in the great dining-

room of the tavern, and he made his way into a small parlour, where his dinner was served privately. While he was eating it, a man entered the room, followed by a waiter bringing a glass of hot brandy and water.

"I hope I don't disturb you, sir," said the newcomer, "but the house is very full to-night, and I have been shown in here, where I can drink my glass of spirits in quiet comfort."

"No apologies are necessary, sir; the room is a public one, and if it were not, I should be pleased to share it with you. You will need the hot stimulant, for the night is cold, and I presume you have a ride before you."

Brand, as he spoke, looked at the other's riding boots, which he was flicking with his whip.

"Yes, sir, a good many miles before I settle for the night," replied the other. "If the waiter speaks truly, you, as a practitioner, will understand that. The village doctor in a big district like this, as you can imagine, does a good deal of riding at all hours."

"Yes, I can understand that. As the waiter

told you, I am a surgeon, although not in similar practice to yourself."

"Ah! from London, perhaps? more luck, or brains, or money, than we poor country practitioners. Never mind, I don't envy you, sir. Life has its compensations even in the country."

"You have nothing to envy me for," answered Brand, laughing; "my practice is not a city one, and I excel you in none of the three qualifications you have mentioned. I am an army surgeon, although at present attached to one of the naval establishments at Portsmouth."

The country doctor pricked up his ears. He said:

"Well, by Jove! now, I am very glad to see you if that's the case, for if you don't mind, I'll take your opinion on a patient of mine."

"By all means, sir. The patient is, I presume, the person in this inn in the next room to my own, of whom the landlord spoke to me."

"Yes; he has been very badly wounded by a pistol shot, and is giving me much trouble and anxiety. The fact is, the man won't recover while

his mind is in its present state, leaving out of the question the seriousness of the wound."

"How was he shot?" asked Brand, only very languidly interested in the wounded man.

"There you have me, sir. He says he was shot in an encounter with a footpad, but I am a great deal more inclined to think either he attempted to commit suicide, or else that he is hiding some other mystery."

"Indeed ; and why?"

"Well, you see, some villager picked him up a month ago lying bleeding to death near Catherington. The carter was on his way to Petersfield, so brought him and unloaded him upon our host here, who at first did not half like the notion. However, I was sent for, and the upshot of it is that I have become in a measure responsible for the man, not only for doctoring him, but for feeding and lodging him."

"But I suppose he is now able to say something for himself?"

"He simply says : 'Get me well, doctor, and I will square all accounts and repay any trouble that anyone has been put to on my account.'"

"That seems fair enough ; what more would you have ?" replied Brand, yawning.

The country doctor shrugged his shoulders, and answered :

" Yes, all very well ; but he tells us that his name is anything I please to call him ; that he has been attacked by a robber—yet he has a bag full of money, and as soon as he recovered consciousness he told us where to find it in his pockets, handed it over to me, and told me to do as I liked with it so long as I held my tongue over the affair."

" Upon my soul, I don't see anything to find fault with in the arrangement. He has paid you in advance, and probably because there is some woman concerned, asks you to hush it up."

" No, sir, that is not what's the matter. The fact is, you know, the times are very unsettled, and one has to be cautious." The village surgeon dropped his voice to a whisper. " I tell you this, therefore, in confidence ; the truth is, the man's an American, and he is very anxious that no one should know it."

Brand jumped from his chair.

"The devil he is! Take me to him. It is possible I know him."

"It is lucky I spoke, then. Come with me at once, and I'll introduce you," said the other eagerly.

When the two men entered the room, the patient was lying uneasily in his bed, wide-awake. The dim light of the one candle was not so dim, nor the face so pinched and ill, that Brand, the moment he saw him, could not recognise Henry Warner.

"I have brought another surgeon to see you; allow me to introduce Dr. ——"

"Brand!" said the owner of the name quietly.

"What name? Where? Come here, closer."

The patient, as he spoke, tried to rise from his bed.

Brand stepped to the bed.

"Yes, it is I, Mr. Warner, and I am very glad to have found you."

"Thank Heaven you have come. I have been puzzling my brains to think how I could safely communicate with you. What has happened? How did you know I was here? Are they all well, and what do they think of my absence?"

"We will talk presently," replied Brand, "but you

are not my patient. If this gentleman, who has been so good as to take care of you so well, would permit us to have some conversation?"

"Certainly, Dr. Brand; I shall leave you two together now, and will come in again to-morrow. I am sure I am very glad that things have happened in this way."

And the other doctor went off, quite convinced in his mind that the meeting was too strange to be mere chance work.

When they were alone Brand took a seat by the bedside, and the American, the moment he did so, said excitedly:

"The Yard was fired, I know. Have they caught anyone?"

"Yes, the Yard was set on fire, and they have not, as yet, caught anyone," replied Brand coldly.

"What do they think of me at Portchester? What does Miss Bagshott think? and you, how did you get here?"

Brand looked the other straight in the eyes for several seconds before replying. Then he answered:

"We don't know what to think; but I am

ready to hear what you have to say. Miss Bagshott will be glad enough if you clear yourself in her eyes and in the eyes of the Government. I came here by accident, and found you; but as a matter of fact, I was just beginning to search for you, and I tell you plainly, I intend very thoroughly to sift out the whole affair."

Warner answered eagerly:

"My dear sir, I have been in a fever for days waiting for the chance to clear myself with you all."

"Tell your story, then, Mr. Warner. I am as anxious to hear it as you can be to tell it," said the doctor.

Then the American told Brand all that happened on the night of his escape from the castle.

"But, why," asked the surgeon—"why didn't you tell this village doctor to communicate with me, and not leave us all this time in suspense?"

"You forget that I am only just beginning to be able to think and speak. Then, when my wits came back, the whole inn here was talking

of the fire in Portsmouth Yard, and a word from me would perhaps have aroused suspicion. Besides, it was not likely that I should be able to clear myself while the other man was free, and if I had attempted to communicate with Portchester, my identity would be known in a moment, and perhaps you yourself dragged into the disgraceful business."

They talked together until late that night, and would have talked longer, but Brand saw that Warner's condition was still serious, and so left the room, promising to spend an hour with him before he went on his way to London.

The following morning, after some conversation between them, Brand said :

"Now, Mr. Warner, you understand I am off to put the authorities upon Hill's track, and when the scoundrel is secured, your part in the business can easily be cleared up without involving you in any way. I have influence enough to keep you out of it."

Warner made an impatient gesture.

"But what about Miss Bagshott? Won't you go directly back to her with a message from me?"

Her father's prejudices and the fire, and the suspicions he will have formed, are every day influences operating against me. For Heaven's sake, go back, doctor, and clear all that away."

Brand made a sign to the other to lie still.

"No," he said, "I must go on to London. I did not tell you last night for fear of exciting you too much, but Captain Bagshott's prejudices will never operate against you again."

"Why? what do you mean? Has he turned American?" and Warner laughed. "Surely such a reverend old hulk could not so far—"

Brand held up his hand solemnly.

"Hush, sir; the reverend old hulk is broken up. Captain Bagshott is dead and in his grave."

Warner fell back on his bed, where he lay silent for some moments. Then he said:

"Doctor! doctor! this is sad news; tell me all about it. You know I had the greatest respect for the old man, although I joked about him. But where, then, is Miss Bagshott? who is looking after her? She must have been left very poorly off. I saw that much while I was there."

Brand's answer was not unkind, although his tone was still cold, almost unfriendly :

"She is staying at Parson Bramber's in the care of his sister ; and she is not well off, but has enough to live upon. Let not these things trouble you, but just get well by lying quietly here. I have seen the local doctor, and told him you were a friend of mine, and that you are to have everything you want until I return."

"And how long am I to be here? I don't seem to make any progress. When will you come back?"

"Listen! I shall be able to return from London in a couple of weeks at most. I shall then run through Petersfield and see how you are. If you are well enough I shall afterwards go on to Portchester, and prepare Miss Bagshott to receive you. Then I shall come back for you, and I hope to play the father to the girl this far: If you can satisfy me of your position in your own country, and clear yourself here, and Miss Bagshott is willing, I myself will give her away. Is that fair, do you think?"

The American's wan face lit up. He put out

his thin hand and grasped the doctor's as he answered :

" Dr. Brand, you are very generous, and I thank you from my soul. I will wait here patiently for your return, and then I will take all the necessary steps to prove myself worthy of your confidence."

" Very well ; good-bye," the doctor replied, still unresponsive to Warner's friendliness. " As you say, I am very generous, and if you can satisfy me, I will, as I have told you, play the part of father at the altar."

Then Brand called for his horse and went on his journey. But he was so lost in thought that he had gone a couple of miles on the way to Portsmouth before he noticed that he had taken the wrong turning.

CHAPTER XVIII

DR. BRAND INTERVIEWS A GREAT MAN

BRAND soon got his wits about him, and his horse's head the right way, and in due course arrived in London, where he put up at an inn suited to his light purse.

Before going to sleep that night he tried to persuade himself that he was pleased to prove Warner an honest man, and that his self-imposed task of bringing the young American back to Dolly was most agreeable to him. But the effort was not a success.

Sometimes he had doubts—or was it hopes? he asked himself—whether Dolly would be really pleased and grateful to him for restoring this lover of a few weeks' acquaintance, or whether, after all, she was glad in her inmost heart to be free. The young people were very young, and were thrown together in a romantic situation, so the

doctor tried to convince himself that in the spring-time of youth, in such circumstances, young people's fancies lightly turn to thoughts of love, and as lightly throw such thoughts aside.

But Brand would not give the rein to those thoughts, mistrusting his judicial capacity in such a case; and besides, the American, at any rate, seemed very much in earnest, and Dolly, alone in the world, needed someone fitted to protect her. He who had found for her a small estate by secretly cutting in halves his own income, still thought he had no right to be playing the part of father to the girl. A husband was her natural protector, and the American—if proper inquiry proved him to be an honest man, with money enough to keep a wife—was, of course, the only husband possible.

"No other way; no other way," he muttered to himself, and then tried to sleep, but instead lay awake all night. The rumbling of the market wagons, as they brought the vegetables into the great city from the fields and market gardens along the road to Kent, became in his ears an echo to his thoughts, and all night they dinned it into him: "No other way; no other way."

Knowing the habits of great men, he had taken care to write and announce his coming, and give good reason to the great man he wanted to see to grant him an interview, and so, in due course, a message was brought to the inn, making an appointment.

He had but one suit of outer clothing, and that not of the fashion of the town, faded, and seldom brushed. But this troubled him not at all, and he only smiled to himself at the supercilious look on the footman's face when the man opened the door of the big mansion. The servant had been told to admit him, and when he gave his name he was promptly shown into the noble lord's study.

The noble lord was a very great man. He occupied a seat in the Cabinet, and an important one, and had much to say in the ruling of his King and country, doing his part quite as honestly as most, and with less knavery than some. But of his private life little was known, though much, with head shakings and mysterious looks, was hinted at.

He entered presently, and having shut the door of the room carefully, nodded at Brand, who

stood quietly at his ease leaning against the mantelpiece. Then he said:

"How do you do, my dear Brand? Pleased to see you; but what's the very important matter that can only be disposed of in an interview?"

Brand refused the offered chair, and replied:

"My lord, I have come to London and to see you upon the public business, and what I have to say I am sure you will be glad to hear; but I must ask you not to disclose certain matters of which I have gained a knowledge, provided that you find, as you will, that no good will come of making them public."

"Very well, Brand. Whatever else you have against me, you know I am not given to blabbing secrets. But I should have been more pleased if you had come to ask me for some better appointment than your present one. You are an excellent, though most infernally independent surgeon; but I suspect that when you begin to meddle with what you are pleased to call the public business, you'll make a mess of it."

"I have come about that fire in Portsmouth Dockyard. I have some information to offer you."

The noble lord whistled softly. Then he said :

"Out with it ; we know more than is supposed, but we don't know enough."

"The night before the fire a prisoner escaped from Portchester, an American, and he is—"

"The man : can you prove it ?"

"No, not the man, but—"

"The other, then ? Can you prove it against him ?"

"You know the other—the so-called painter ?"

"Of course ; do you think we are asleep ?"

"Well, my lord, to tell you the truth, I thought the Government was mighty careless. People seem to walk about the Yard at their own free will to spy, to burn, to—"

"Yes, yes, quite true, my dear sir," and the great man nodded impatiently. "Englishmen don't understand keeping their public places guarded, but that cannot be mended. Meantime, go on, and we'll see if we can't lock the stable door now."

Then Brand told him the whole story, even to the affair between Dolly and Warner, and ended by asking what was to be done to clear

the American, or, at all events, to give him an opportunity of leaving the country for France.

"Where Miss Bagshott can, later on, join him, if he satisfies me of his respectability," added the doctor.

His lordship smiled pleasantly.

"Good; now you have told me all you know, I will be equally candid with you, and tell you everything, and then you will see that we are not quite such fools as some people take us for."

"I don't think you are by any means a fool, my lord, but I would like to know what we can do to capture this man Hill."

"I am more knave than fool, eh?" said the other, with a short laugh. "But as to Hill, why, we'll arrest him. Nothing simpler."

"First catch your hare!"

"Not always. We might have caught him long ago. But, of course, you don't understand. Listen! The Bow Street officers have had both these men under observation for some time. Your sick man at Petersfield has been known to us for a long while, and a Bow Street runner has been staying in the town in the guise of a

farmer for the last week. Your other man is now working at Odiham, in the north of Hampshire, and is there watched by another officer, who pretends to be a gamekeeper. We suspected both, but didn't know which was the man, or whether both together were in it. We did know they had come over from France some time ago, and that they were Americans, or rather one of them was. The other is a deserter from one of our regiments in the colonies."

Brand was surprised at the other's knowledge, and showed it.

"What an escape for Warner! But why have you not made an arrest?"

"Against your wounded man we had nothing, except that we traced his escape from Portchester, where we hadn't the least right to put him in the first place. Against the second man we had many suspicious circumstances, but no facts; and knowing that the two men had been in each other's company, were waiting for Warner to get well enough, and then we should have seized him, and expected to get the necessary proof from him to justify proceeding against his companion."

"Not his companion, my lord, his assassin."

"As you please. Anyhow, what am I to do now? I said arrest Hill, as you call him, but how the devil am I to proceed if you want the other fellow's business hushed up?"

"I confess I don't see what can be done, unless you consider the Mildwaters' evidence enough, although I have promised the woman should not get into trouble; but she might be called."

"It is easy to see you are no lawyer. We want something more than this. What does it all amount to without Warner? A man named Hill takes a lodging at Portsmouth, and tries to get work in the Yard. Some ignorant fool of a workman fancies he has seen the man hanging about the rope house. A chattering old fool of a woman says the man once lodged with her, and her husband tried to get him work; that he went away on the night of the fire. He tells her he is going to look for work, and there is not the least evidence that he was not honestly doing so."

"But the bundle and its contents, and the fact of his being a deserter?"

"The last only accounts for the man's keeping

himself so quiet. The bundle contained nothing that could associate him with the fire. Ovid's 'Metamorphosis,' and a treatise on fireworks, which you say were in the bundle, do not prove anything. The passport in Warner's name only proves that he stole it from Warner. Besides, we traced all this. A Bow Street runner was at Portsmouth, and found out from a tavern in the neighbourhood about the strange man. Then traced him from Mildwater's to the Raven Inn, where he is now living at Hook. He found work at the neighbouring village of Odiham. There the runner made morally certain of him. Another man discovers Warner at Petersfield, and that only complicates matters."

His lordship ran over the details in a manner that astonished Brand, who could only reply:

"Well, I give them credit for being sharp fellows for having done that much."

"Pooh, I could have done it myself," said the noble lord airily. "Petersfield is on the main road from Portsmouth to London, and these fellows made inquiries at every roadside inn on every road out of Portsmouth, besides drinking with

every Portsmouth waterman, to discover, as was more likely, if any of them had given the criminal a passage to France."

"Can you, my lord, suggest any way of meeting my wishes with regard to Warner?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, as to that, don't worry yourself. I have no doubt, as you say he is all right—in fact, I know he is; and you can take my certificate as to his character, and his position, as the son of a well-to-do Philadelphian merchant, highly respectable, with nothing against him but the rebellion. I know all this from inquiry; so marry him to whom you will, the girl will be well provided for. What troubles me is the other fellow. It would be a first-rate idea to arrest him for the murder of Warner, and hang him for that—only we couldn't produce a body. Besides, we want to make an example, and frighten other people off this idea of setting fire to our dockyards."

"I fancy you would find it just as difficult to prove that he murdered a live man, which he did not, as to prove he set fire to the Yard, which he did."

The noble lord laughed :

"Not at all; Bow Street runners will swear anything, and they can always find plenty of people to do likewise; but all the evidence in this case has to come from the Yard, and you can't teach Portsmouth dockyardmen how to give evidence in a court of law."

"I have great respect for the skill of your officers, but if, my lord, you will permit me, I will make a bargain with you, by which I can do more than they can."

"By all means give me your opinion," said the minister heartily, "and I will agree to anything in reason."

"Thank you. Then on a date we will presently agree upon, arrest Hill, and let me have access to him; knowing what I know, and armed with the knowledge I have gained from Warner, I will, unless I am very much mistaken, get enough out of him to furnish your Bow Street people with clues."

"Look here, Brand, if you manage this—and you will manage it, for you have more brains than all these people put together—you will be doing the State a great service, and we ought to repay you."

"I only want to get Warner clear of the affair, and I would like to see the rascal who has caused all the trouble hanged. I want no reward or payment of any kind. I am well enough off."

"Before you go," began the great man, then hesitated—"I know it is a sore subject with you—but will you accept promotion to Haslar? I can appoint you in a couple of months to the charge of the hospital, with three times the income. Considering you are my brother-in-law, you might allow me."

"My lord," replied Brand quietly, "when you induced my sister to marry you, I, knowing your character, was only angry. When twelve months later she died of a broken heart, I would—if I had been in England at the time—have run you through the body. I have got over that folly now, but I want no favours. Therefore, let us drop the subject. I will go through with this affair, and then we will keep clear of each other in the future."

"Very well, Brand, very well. Perhaps you are right. I was younger then—and—and, well, there's no more to be said. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT CAME OF THE INTERVIEW

BRAND went back to his inn. All was going famously, he told himself. Warner was cleared; and the young American—whom he had come to shoot, if he had found him, and proved him a rascal, or that he was false to Dolly—would presently, by his means, be restored to the girl, and all would end happily. Oh, yes, everything was going famously. But there was work to do. The miscreant who had caused all the mischief was still free, and Warner's safety depended upon the other's conviction. Dolly's father was in his grave, Dolly's lover was lying perilously close to the brink of death, and the girl, he thought, breaking her heart for news. The doctor, pacing his room, thinking out a plan to convict the author of the mischief, stopped as he ran over the account in

his mind ; and whatever scruples he had felt before, he threw them over now, and swore he would hang the man himself rather than by any trick of law he should escape. He foresaw that what was before him would take some time to complete. Meanwhile, Dolly must not be left in suspense, and so he sat down and wrote to her :

“DEAR DOLLY,—For as presently I shall claim a father’s privilege, and give you to a husband, I write dear Dolly — Mr. Warner is found innocent, cleared of everything that I may most unjustly have in my mind imagined against him—even his non-return—his silence. He is lying very ill at Petersfield, but is now fairly on the way to recover, since I have met him and assured him that in a little while I shall be able to clear his good name, and bring him with me to Portchester. I cannot return for a week or two, because I have urgent business—an account to settle with a man who must be paid for what some of us owe him. Do you, like a good girl, write a few lines to Mr. Warner at the White Hart, Petersfield. Tell him that a welcome awaits him when he returns to

Portchester with me, or say something kindly of that nature, which will, I am sure, complete his recovery. But don't—forgive me for thinking it possible you might—don't imagine him very ill and needing nursing. Don't do more than write. And I think you had better not mention what I have written in this letter to the parson, or to Miss Bramber, to whom I present my best wishes,—
Yours, very very happy to write good news,

“ARTHUR BRAND.”

The doctor was so happy, indeed, that once or twice, as he was penning this letter, he was forced to stop and bury his face in his hands to hide from the room furniture his passing emotions.

On the following day he held another interview with his noble relative, and then returned to his inn to wait events. Two days later a man came to the inn with a request that the doctor would accompany him to Bow Street to Sir John Fielding's office.

Brand went off in haste, and in the coach on his way asked the messenger if he knew what was in the wind.

"Sir," replied the man, "you know very well what's in the wind, or I am much mistaken."

"You may be mistaken. Whom have you arrested? You are an officer, I presume?"

"Well, you may have heard of me; my name's Tomlinson, and if you don't know of me as a Bow Street officer, I fancy you have never been employed in this kind of work before?"

"No, I have not; but whom have you arrested?"

"That, sir, is very well known to you. We have taken a man named John Hill."

"And he is charged with—?"

"Burglary at Odiham, in Hampshire."

"Oh! With nothing else?"

The other looked quickly at the doctor, and put his finger to his nose.

"With nothing else at present, Dr. Brand," he said.

"Ah, I see you know me, and are well posted in this affair."

The other laughed.

"Well, considering that I have charge of the business, I ought to be."

"What part am I to play when we get to Bow Street?"

"Just answer to the name we have given you, take your cue from Sir John, and you'll see it will turn out all right."

"You know I can't identify the man?" said Brand doubtfully.

"I know that, sir. You tell the truth, and leave the rest to me."

When they got to the office it was late in the afternoon. All the day's cases had been disposed of, and the room was empty of the usual crowd of thieves and thief catchers, and such like rascals.

Tomlinson took the doctor by the arm and led him to a seat at the back, where, surrounded by half-a-dozen runners, he could not be seen from the dock, and then the officer who had brought him left the room.

Presently Sir John Fielding entered by a private door, and took a seat on the bench.

"Bring in the accused," he said; and then two officers led in John Hill, and put him inside a railed dock.

The man appeared ill, and clung to the rails in front of him as one who was unable to stand

without support. His clothing was dirty and ragged, as if he had been sleeping out at nights upon muddy country roads. He looked round the room, anxiously searching the faces of the few persons present for some clue as to what witnesses were to be brought against him.

"Is Tomlinson present?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes, yer Waship, I am here."

"This accused, John Hill, what is he charged with—burglary?"

"Yes, yer Waship. We arrested him on that charge, but we ask for a remand, as we have reason to believe that he is concerned in a more serious crime, and we want to produce the necessary witnesses to secure his committal."

"You hear this, accused? What have you to say?"

"Nothing."

The prisoner, as he made the reply, stood erect for a moment, looking the magistrate squarely in the face, and seemed, having completed his scrutiny of those in the court-room, to be quite indifferent to the proceedings.

"You say nothing, prisoner? Very well, Tom-

linson, I will remand him for a week. Is there anything more to be done?"

"Yes, yer Waship," replied Tomlinson, "I have an unwilling witness here, whom I have reason to believe can identify the prisoner. The accused calls himself John Hill, and says he is an Englishman, and a painter by trade. We believe he is an American, who came over from France some weeks ago for a certain purpose, and this witness may be able to identify him."

The accused was very intent now, and once more peered anxiously round the room.

"What has this to do with the burglary?"

"This, your Waship: If we can identify him, we shall not proceed with the burglary charge, but shall lay an information on a more serious matter."

"Very well; call your witness."

Tomlinson then beckoned to Brand.

"What am I to do?" whispered the surgeon;
"I don't understand."

"Tell the truth; it's all right," answered the other, in the same tone. "We don't want to give it all away to the defence, you know—he may get counsel,

and we only want to establish confidence between you. Sir John knows what he is doing."

Tomlinson grinned and winked, as he whispered his advice, in a manner which made the doctor feel very uncomfortable.

Then the Bow Street runner indicated Brand with a nod, and said :

"This is the man Baldwin, who may be able to identify the accused, yer Waship."

Brand started for the moment at his new name, then stepped into the witness-box, and as he did so Hill looked hard at him, and was evidently puzzled.

"Do you know the accused, sir?" asked the magistrate. "You have lived in Philadelphia, I am informed, and it is alleged that this man comes from that part of the world."

Brand looked straight at Hill. Then he said :

"No, I have never seen this man before, although I have lived in Philadelphia."

The prisoner smiled triumphantly at the magistrate.

"That will do, sir, you may step down. And you, Tomlinson, keep an eye on this witness; he admits having lived in Philadelphia, and we may have an occasion to want him presently."

"Yes, yer Waship; I have had my eye on him, and on one or two others of his countrymen, for some time past."

Then the magistrate, saying he would remand the prisoner for a week for the production of evidence, left the bench, and Tomlinson beckoned Brand over to him, leading him to the dock.

"Here," said the Bow Street runner to the painter, "this man wants to know if he can do anything for you; he don't like to see a fellow-countryman in distress. I expect he will turn out to be as great a rogue as yourself, though."

"You are an honest man," said the prisoner. "You might just as easily have sworn I was a great rogue; it would have pleased these people better. Will you come and see me, and I may ask you to do something to aid me on my trial?"

Brand began to feel a greater rogue by far than the man in the dock, but he determined to go through with the task he had set himself.

"Yes, I will come and see you, if I am allowed," he said, looking at the officer.

The runner, answering the look, replied:

"Well, you'll have to get an order; we are taking him to the new prison at Clerkenwell, and I fancy that the Government won't like it. However, the poor devil appears to have no friends, and since you're fool enough to interfere in his affairs, I'll not offer an objection. Take the prisoner away."

When Hill had been removed, Tomlinson chuckled quietly.

"Well, Mr. Baldwin," he whispered, "the rest is with you; a little skill on your part, and you can supply us with the missing links."

CHAPTER XX

SCARS

IT took Brand the whole of that night to force himself to go on with the part he was playing, but the thought of Bagshott's death, and of Warner's narrow escape, braced him to the task, and the next day, duly provided with an order of admission, he went to the prison.

When he entered the cell the prisoner advanced, holding out his hand, but Brand waved him aside.

"You think I am a villain, and will not shake hands with me?" Hill said.

"No, I won't shake hands with you," Brand replied. "Understand, I don't want to be regarded by you as a friend. You asked to see me here; if I can help you to prove your innocence I will willingly do so; but make no mistake, I am no friend, I warn you."

He could not for the life of him help putting the man on his guard, though he reflected how poorly he was playing the spy, and how little he was likely to gain by the method. But it was no use, he could take no other way.

"Bah! As to the burglary—there is nothing in that—these people don't want to prove that against me."

"What, then, is their object?"

The painter, who was walking backward and forward, paused suddenly, and looked at Brand.

"That is my affair. You profess to be an American. I can tell you this much, that what I attempted to do and failed in would have done more for America than all their Franklins or their Deans could have done."

"Do you mean to say they have arrested you like a common felon for some honourable act of war?" Brand asked.

"I don't know what your milk-and-water patriots, or the men who flog their soldiers to death, call honourable war, but I am proud of my work, and only wish it had been more complete."

"You infernal murdering scoundrel! Is the shooting of your own countryman, is the death of an innocent old man, is the cowardly act of sneaking into Portsmouth Dockyard, and destroying the wretched labourers' daily bread, work to be proud of?"

The doctor's fist was within an inch of the other's face, and the sound of his voice rang out loud and threatening — a pretty way, indeed, to play the part of informer. Dr. Brand, ill-fitted for such dirty work, in a minute had thrown off the cloak, and was done with it.

Hill, astounded at the other's speech, fell back before the uplifted hand, unable to understand his visitor, or to answer him — only dimly comprehending that this man knew of a deed that he had thought was safely hidden in the woods of Catherington.

"By Heavens! I have a mind to throttle you in your cell, and would, but for Warner's sake!" went on the doctor, still threatening with his fist.

"Who are you? What do you mean? What was Warner to you?"

"Listen, and I will tell you who I am." Brand

was calmer now. "I am a man who came here bent on seeing you hung as high as Haman ; on playing the spy upon you until I had sheeted home your rascality ; but I am not infernal rogue enough to follow it out. I can't play your game ; I can't sneak into your prison and lay traps to catch you, as you sneaked into the hemp house with your matches and tinder-box. I prefer to come to open blows, and I'll give you, villain as you are, a better chance than you gave Warner on that night in the wood."

The painter, in the corner of his cell farthest from where the other stood, sank upon a wooden bench, and as Brand poured the torrent of his just wrath upon him, he cowered for some time unable to speak, until, by an effort, he muttered :

"Did you see it all? Who are you? Who are you? What does it mean?"

In a brilliant flash of thought an idea came to Brand, now himself again, and he answered :

"Listen ! never mind who I am ; but I'll tell you what I know, and what I am about to do, and by the Lord, you'll see that your time has come to pay the reckoning !"

"What does it mean? What does it mean? Who are you? Who are you?" Hill still kept muttering.

"I know you. I know you for the man who aided Warner to escape, who led him to the thick of Catherington Wood, who shot him in cold blood. I know you for the man who planned the fire at the Yard, while you were lodging with the Mildwaters; I know how you planted your infernal machine in the hemp house, and how you fired the rope walk. This crime the Government can prove against you if I hand them the proofs; but I'll not do so. The crime in the wood at Catherington is the one for which I'll have you hanged."

"I am not a murderer; I shot him in self-defence," said the other hoarsely.

"You lie. You are an assassin—a commonplace murderer, and a miserable incendiary."

Hill was no longer crouching, but erect and proudly defiant of the doctor.

"Yes," he said; "yes, I set fire to the Yard. I am proud of it, and will go cheerfully to death in such a cause! How many of you would do as much for your country? How many Americans would do as much? For I am an Englishman, but I have

better cause to hate England than even these fools of Colonists have."

"Well, then, you are only a more infernal rascal than I thought you at first. What motive could you have to commit such a crime?"

"What motive? Look you." The man threw open his coat and tore his shirt off. "Look at this. These stripes are the marks of five hundred lashes, my reward for fighting King George's battles in America. I, a wounded man, for a hasty word, was paid for years of service, for wounds received in action, with these wounds from the drummer's cat. Then I deserted, and swore I'd have satisfaction, and you can go and tell the fools who sent you here to spy on me who I am, and why I burned the rope house."

Brand, looking upon the scars on the man's back, was moved for a moment. But for Dolly's sake he was none the less determined effectually to clear Warner, and the only way to prove Warner innocent was to convict Hill.

"All this is very fine," he said; "but I am not interested. Warner's murder is what concerns me, and for that you shall hang."

"I killed Warner because he would have baulked me. If you must have my life, don't, for God's sake, have me hanged for murder!"

The surgeon looked upon the deluded wretch, understanding well the working of his poor mind, seeing clearly how to turn the pitiable dignity of the man to his advantage. They had put the painter in a separate cell, so that Brand should carry out his plan, and a grating in the door showed the warder out of hearing at the end of the passage. Brand stepped to the grating and beckoned to him, and as the man came to open the door, the surgeon went to the painter's corner, and whispered in his ear:

"Poor devil!" he said, "I almost pity you. If I could believe that you did not murder Warner, I could almost forgive you. I'll come back to-morrow, and we'll talk of this."

"No, no; don't go away. Don't leave me. Did they find—the—the body?—how much is known?—send the gaoler away—tell me, do they know of it?"

He was clutching Brand by the arm, and in an abject posture whispering in his ear. The surgeon

shook him off, and turning to the gaoler, said :

“Go away for a little while ; I am not ready yet.”

“Have pity on me, whoever you are ; it can make no difference to you. Don't accuse me of killing him.”

Brand pushed away the prisoner's hand, and replied :

“Listen ! You have one chance, and this I will give you ; if you accept it, you may save your life. I tell you plainly, I don't think you will, but I'll give you that chance.”

“I care nothing for my life ; I would as soon surrender myself to-morrow, but—”

Hill shuddered and stopped.

“No,” said Brand quietly. “It would be a poor ending to be hanged for murder.”

“And why should you bring me to that ? What was Warner to you that you should follow me here to tell me of that scene in the wood ? Was it to gloat over me, to play the spy, and act the executioner ?”

“I have told you I'll give you a chance,” Brand answered.

"What does that mean?" asked the other. "If it is to betray people whom you think are my accomplices, I tell you plainly that I have none."

"What about Silas Dean? Warner told you that the Americans wanted none of your infernal aid. And then you murdered him for telling you."

"Warner knew nothing about it. Of course, they would disown my work, but for Warner I should not have been here now. But what is your bargain? You have me caged, and you think that you can make your own terms, but I tell you plainly that I would sooner be remembered as Felton is, by a gibbet on Southsea Common, than drag anyone but myself into this—anything short of that I'll do, if you'll hold your tongue about the — death of Warner."

"Well, I'll make a bargain," Brand replied. "I have reasons for not making public that Warner, who was my friend, had any connection with this crime. Honourable as was the part he played, I don't want his name coupled with yours."

"Well, then, hold your tongue."

"No; I tell you plainly there is plenty of evidence against you; you must be aware that

your visits to the Yard are known, your whole life at the Mildwaters', your attempt upon the hemp house, the night you were locked in the building, your flight from Portsmouth. The chain is pretty complete; you can see that?"

"Yes; I don't deny it, and I don't care. What then?"

"But if the officers of judgment go on searching for clues to complete that chain, they will presently come upon that night in the wood, and my friend Warner's name will be dragged in."

"What then? What then? For God's sake, come to the point!"

Hill was again getting excited, and the doctor becoming cooler, so that he replied very deliberately :

"The authorities were told by me that I could save them further trouble, and tell them all they wanted to know, if I were given a free hand with you."

"Well, well; what do you want? Why, man, you have the whole story."

"I want a full statement from you of all that you did from the moment of your landing in

England until your arrest, leaving out all reference to Warner."

"Yes, yes ; what then ?"

"I shall give this statement to the authorities, and they can build up a case against you, and then they may hang you or let you go free for all I care."

"In other words, you want a written confession from me, so that you can ensure my being hanged."

"No, I don't ask even that ; but I tell you, there is some legal quibble in the case against you, and unless they can clear up certain doubts, it is possible that Warner may be suspected of complicity with you."

"You know everything now. I have nothing to tell you. You have the Mildwaters' evidence, the men who have seen me in the Yard, my apparatus discovered in the hemp house, the manner of my flight, and I suppose you have found the man who made the tin canister at Canterbury, the woman from whom I bought the matches, and—"

"Yes, yes ; and—"

"Oh, you know all now."

"Who made the canister? who was the woman who sold you the matches?"

"Ah! I have told you something new, then?"

"Come, make a clean breast of it; tell me everything, and I will keep my bargain with the Government, and you can take your chance when you are tried. I will say nothing of Warner's death."

Then the doctor turned to go, but Hill held him for a moment firmly by the shoulder, as he fiercely whispered:

"I will give you all the aid I can to hang me, and you can do your worst; but I tell you plainly I shall make a fight for it at the trial, and if the death of Warner is mentioned, if I can come within reach of you, and get my hands for a moment free, I will kill you in the court-house."

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRIAL OF JACK THE PAINTER

JACK THE PAINTER was tried at the March Assizes, at Winchester, in 1777. The case was the talk of England at the time, and the singular method by which Hill was brought to justice is fully told in a volume of the State trials, where readers can find for themselves that this story is quite as true as most history.

The court-house, of course, was crowded, and the unhappy man in the dock had little chance against the array of learned counsel the Crown had employed to prosecute him. There were only five of these gentlemen, including Mr. Fielding, who, as the learned junior, opened the case. The judge, the grand jury, the petty jury, the attorneys and officers, the dozen or more of witnesses, and the gallery crowd, all seemed to Hill, as he gazed round the

court, to have assembled, actuated by one motive—the wish to hang him. Indeed, this was true enough; the whole country had been roused by this attack upon the Dockyard, and everyone, from the highest to the lowest, was convinced that France and America had between them planned the outrage.

The accused stood erect in the dock, answering clearly to the name of John Hill, *alias* Jack the Painter. When the jury were duly sworn, and the clerk uttered the solemn words: “You shall well and truly try and true deliverance make between our Sovereign Lord the King and the prisoner at the bar,” the prisoner interrupted the proceedings by saying in a loud, clear voice: “I am not a subject of your King.” But no notice was taken of this, except by the crier, who made a great noise, crying, “Order; order; silence!”

The clerk read the indictment, with all its jargon of legal technicalities, and the prisoner said, in reply to the usual question:

“How do I plead? Not guilty, of course.”

Mr. Fielding began the attack by putting into comparatively intelligible English, for the benefit of

the jury, the matter of the indictment, in which Hill was charged with burning the King's Dockyard, or rather, with attempting to burn the Yard.

Then Mr. Sergeant Davy, the leading counsel, got upon his feet, adjusted his wig, threw the few shreds remaining of his ragged gown over his left arm, and pointing his right hand at the prisoner, opened fire.

The caged man in the dock leant forward, his hands upon the rails, apparently listening to the counsel's harangue, but paying no heed to its substance, interested only when once or twice the name of Warner was mentioned.

Said the learned sergeant :

"May it please your lordship and you gentlemen of the jury, I am counsel in this case for the King in the prosecution of the prisoner at the bar, who is described by the name of John Hill, otherwise Henry Warner."

Two people started at the name : Dr. Brand, at the back of the court, and the prisoner in the dock, who trembled visibly.

But counsel evidently knew what was expected of him, and so, without a pause, he went on :

“Mr. Warner, you must know, is the name of a highly respectable American, with whom this case has no concern whatever, but the prisoner having committed various burglaries and other crimes, became possessed of a passport issued to this Warner, which passport is part of the evidence I shall presently adduce.”

Counsel said this with emphasis, and the prisoner again became quite indifferent to the proceedings, while Tomlinson whispered into Dr. Brand's ear :

“I told you that it would be all right ; we always play the game fairly.”

Brand had been startled by the introduction of Warner's name so much that he was on the point of interjecting. Relieved of his fears, he shuddered as he looked across at the dock and heard Mr. Sergeant Davy steadily driving nails into Hill's coffin.

After dwelling upon the enormity of the crime, and stating there was no suspicion that it was a crime until many days later, the sergeant went on to say :

“There was then discovered in the hemp house at Portsmouth Dockyard by some men, in turning over the hemp, a sort of canister, which one at first sight imagined to be a tea canister ; upon looking a little

further, there were found combustibles of various kinds. Then it struck the finders, and there could be no doubt in any mind upon the subject, that whoever placed that machine there had an intention to set the place on fire. The men were struck with astonishment, and at once went to the Commissioner of the Yard, and informed him of it, that the proper evidence of this matter might be laid before Government, and fit inquiry made into it. Proper inquiry made, for the first time, clear and apparent to every one, that the fire, which had happened on the 7th of December, in the rope house, had not been by accident, but by design. Now, gentlemen, let us endeavour to recollect every circumstance of that unhappy day. While it was thought to have been accident, nobody gave themselves the trouble to inquire or to recollect who they had seen, who was there, or who was not there. But from the instant that they resolved that this must have been the work of some devil, or that this was some human contrivance, that this was an act done on purpose, then it was fit to revert back to the subject, and to turn in their minds all the circumstances of that day.

“Now,” went on the sergeant, freshly adjusting his

wig, and generally assuming an air which gave the jury to understand there was something coming, and no mistake—"now, my lud and gentlemen, I claim your particular attention to what follows. The discovery in the hemp house set lots of people thinking, and it occurred to one person that a man had been seen on the day of the fire lurking very much about the hemp house and about the rope house; then it happened that a man had been locked into the hemp house, and with some difficulty had got out again."

Counsel stopped for a moment, and his eyes wandered over the court until, presently, they caught sight of Dr. Brand, who visibly trembled as the learned counsel touched upon his share in the business.

"A very worthy, honourable gentleman, whom I have in my eye, and who is a very great friend to the public, and in the strict and true sense of the word, a patriot, very actively bestirred himself in the business, and was very much concerned in the arrest of this John Hill, whom, from certain matters that had come to the knowledge of the Crown, there was reason to suspect.

"This John Hill, or as he was known to many from his occupation, this John the Painter, was accordingly taken up at Odiham; and you will be pleased to mark that there was then found upon him a loaded pistol, a pistol tinder-box, and some matches. He was examined, but he had too much sense, he was too guarded, to make any considerable admission upon the examination that he underwent before a magistrate, and had it not been for a circumstance, which I am now going to mention to you, it would be an extremely difficult matter to affix the crime upon this person at the bar, however satisfied one might have been in one's own private judgment of his guilt.

"It happened that it became known to the Crown that a gentleman who had long been in Philadelphia, where it was believed Hill came from, was in London, and it was thought that he might know the prisoner, and, therefore, he was sent for to Bow Street, in order to be shown the prisoner, and to inform the magistrate whether he did or did not know him. That man, being asked the question, answered he did not know him, and to the best of his recollection had never

seen him in all his lifetime. There was an end, therefore, of that business, as that man had worked in the same place, for I think the prisoner had worked at Philadelphia too. The prisoner having been informed that this person, who was called Baldwin, was an American, naturally enough desired to know him, and the accused asked Baldwin to visit him at the new prison, Clerkenwell, where he was to be confined, and Baldwin accordingly, having obtained permission of the authorities, did visit the prisoner.

“In the course of Baldwin’s visits to the prisoner, the latter made the disclosures I am about to relate. He said that he was an agent of Dr. Franklin and Silas Dean, that he had come over from France, and he had landed at Dover, and so came through Canterbury. At Canterbury he had engaged a man to make a tin machine, which you will see by-and-by, somewhat resembling a tin canister, the purpose of which was to act the part, if I may so say, of a lantern; that is, that a candle might be enclosed in it, and yet the candle be perfectly hid, so that no eye should see the light. This canister prisoner took with him to Ports-

mouth in a wooden box. The use of the box was to contain the combustibles, which were to be lighted by a match, in order to set the place on fire; the preparation and the ingredients of this you will have an account of. Prisoner told Baldwin he had taken a lodging at Portsmouth, at a Mrs. Mildwater's, where he had made some preparations for the work of setting the place on fire. I should have told you, in the conversation with regard to Canterbury, he told Baldwin likewise of a quarrel he had had there with a dragoon, which had led to a sight of the canister under the flap of his coat. He said at Mrs. Mildwater's he had made preparations in order to set the storehouses on fire; and he told him there the manner of his making this composition, that it was by grinding charcoal with water very fine upon a colour stone, such as painters use in grinding their paint, and that it was then to be mixed with gunpowder."

The Mildwaters, seated in the body of the court, at the mention of their names looked round proudly at all present. But Mildwater, as he sat holding his hat between his knees, was soon

reminded that such distinction had its drawbacks, for Mrs. Mildwater whispered in his ear :

“Let this be a warnin’ to you, Mildwas, agen bringin’ such men to a respectable woman’s house as lodgers.”

Counsel, continuing his speech, went on to say that the prisoner then told Baldwin that on the afternoon of the fire, being in the rope house, he got a parcel of hemp, and strewed the hemp about where he intended the match to be ; that he laid a bottle of turpentine on its side, with hemp in the neck of the bottle instead of cork ; that he laid the match upon a piece of paper in which was some gunpowder, and over the powder some hemp. He told him that as soon as the match reached the gunpowder it would fire the hemp, and he mentioned also his throwing a quart of turpentine about the hemp.

“I should have told you that he said this Mrs. Mildwater was frightened of this experiment in her house, and almost turned him out of his lodgings. She is a highly respectable woman. I shall call her presently, and you can see that for yourselves.”

Mrs. Mildwater smoothed her shawl and adjusted her bonnet in readiness for the ordeal, and counsel continued:

"The prisoner also told him a circumstance of his being shut in at the hemp house the previous day, when he had been trying to fire it. But his matches failed on that occasion; that he was so long in the place about this work that the time of shutting it up had arrived, and when he attempted to go out at the door he could not get out; that after having walked up and down, and endeavouring to get out quietly, finding all that impracticable, that he knocked, and cried out 'Hullo' to a person on the outside, who showed him a way out. The matches he had bought from a woman on Portsmouth Hard and they would not take fire, so you see, from this cause only the hemp house was saved from destruction. He told Baldwin how he soundly rated the woman who sold him these inferior matches, and bought others from her, by which he succeeded next day in setting fire to the rope house. That this fire caught quicker than he expected it would, and that he had only just

time to escape through one of the town gates when the whole of Portsmouth was alarmed.

“He further told Baldwin that just after his leaving the town he overtook a woman in a cart; that he got her leave to get into her cart, for the sake of expediting his journey; that he then hastened towards London as fast as he could. Another circumstance, likewise, he mentioned: that of his leaving a bundle at his lodging with the highly respected Mildwater. He said that he had come away from Portsmouth in so great a hurry that he had not time to go there for it, and that bundle, he said, contained some books, the titles of which he mentioned, and likewise some clothing and a French passport. All these things, he said, were in his bundle, which he had left with the woman at his lodgings at Portsmouth Common. It was impossible for Baldwin to have invented this story, for Baldwin, having made a discovery of these conversations, an inquiry was made into these particulars, of which you shall now have an account, and which will be proved to you in evidence.

“Messengers were despatched by the Crown

to all the places mentioned by the prisoner to Baldwin, and all the people he spoke of were found, and are within the precincts of this court, waiting to give evidence. We shall produce the person who made the tin canister; the dragoon with whom the prisoner quarrelled at Canterbury, and who saw the canister in Hill's possession; Mrs. Mildwater, with whom the prisoner lodged, and whose house was nearly set on fire by his experiments. This witness will also swear to the bundle and its contents, which will be produced in court, and which, as I have told you, the prisoner left at his lodging. The watchman who let the prisoner out of the hemp house on the night he was locked in; the woman who sold him matches; the landlord of the inn, who noticed him wearing shoe buckles and other clothing which are in that bundle which we produce; the woman who drove him out of Portsmouth on the night of the fire, and was alarmed at his demeanour, which was that of a man flying from justice—all these witnesses, my lud and gentlemen of the jury, we shall produce, as well as persons from the Dockyard to prove the fire, and the circum-

stances relating to it, of which I have told you.

“Now, when you have all these circumstances proved to you in evidence, will not you say that it was impossible for Mr. Baldwin to have invented this story, for these discoveries were made in consequence of Mr. Baldwin’s relation; not that Baldwin’s relation was after the discoveries, for it was the relation of Baldwin from the mouth of the prisoner that led to a discovery of all the particulars which I have now mentioned to you. The tenth part of these circumstances, which I have opened, would serve, I should think, to decide the fate of any man standing in the prisoner’s situation; but it is the wish of the public, it is the wish of the Government, that all the public should know to whom they are indebted for the sorrows they have felt, and how much they owe to the providence of God that America has not been able totally to destroy this country, and to make it bow its neck, not only to America, but to the most petty chief in Europe. For, let the English Navy be destroyed—and there was a hand ready to effect it—let but the English Navy be

destroyed, and there is an end of all we hold dear and valuable. The importance of the subject, the magnitude, the extraordinary nature of the thing, calls for a more particular investigation than any other subject, of what kind soever, could demand ; and therefore, I need, I hope, make no apology for having descended so particularly into these minute (if any of them can be called minute) particulars of this story. We shall prove all these circumstances to the full, and surely there can be no doubt what shall be done with the man. I shall be glad to hear what he has to say for himself, and I shall be glad if he is able to lay his guilt at anybody's door besides those to whom he has laid it. I wish Mr. Silas Dean were here ; a time may come, perhaps, when he and Dr. Franklin may be here."

The prisoner looked up and spoke out clearly : "They are very honest men," he said.

COUNSEL : "We shall see, we shall see. Call the first witness."

And they called them all in turn, who swore to all the things counsel had said they would, Mrs. Mildwater and "her Mildwas" being much upset

at having thus to appear against their former lodger. After giving their evidence, they left the court-room in tears, and went back to obscurity, or, rather, to such notoriety as their neighbours in Chapel Row could give them.

Then the judge summed up, and the jury almost immediately pronounced the prisoner "Guilty."

It was late in the afternoon when the proceedings reached this stage, and the trial had lasted from ten o'clock in the morning, yet Hill had stood unmoved all through the ordeal, leaning forward, listening quietly to the evidence, offering no comments upon it. When the case closed, the jury never hesitated, nor appeared to think of leaving the box, but pronounced their verdict immediately.

The candles shed but a poor light around the court, leaving the man in the dock almost in darkness; and Brand, as he looked across to the silent figure leaning upon the spikes, felt that he had already entered upon the Valley of the Shadows.

Then from the judge came the solemn question :

"Have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

And from out of the gloom Hill answered firmly: "I have nothing to say."

The judge, in the moving manner peculiar to judges on such occasions, passed sentence of death, telling the prisoner he would not add to the pain of his position by dwelling on the enormity of the crime, and then dwelling upon it for a considerable time, and in very strong language.

When his lordship had finished, the prisoner looked up at him and said:

"My lord, I am exceedingly well satisfied."

Before he was removed he beckoned Brand to the dock. The doctor reluctantly crossed over to the spiked railings, and Hill whispered to him:

"Come and see me turned off; I ask it as a favour."

Brand, thinking the man had spoken thus from the bitterness of his heart, shook his head.

"No," he said, "I cannot do that, but I have a word of comfort for you. Listen; bend your head over the rail—I want to whisper."

"Yes; what is it?"

"Warner is not dead; he is fast recovering. You have not that crime upon your soul."

"Listen in turn. I suspected as much. I knew from your manner lately, and I reasoned it out; but I would not baulk you at the last. In return for what I have left unspoken, remember that among the howling mob who come to the show I shall see no friendly face. Do me one kindness; let me see you at the last. I want to look upon a man to nerve me for the end."

"I will be there; I promise you that, though I am but a poor comforter for such an hour. Good-bye"

CHAPTER XXII

TWO ENDINGS

DR. BRAND'S month's leave was up long before his adventures in London and the trial at Winchester were over, but he got it renewed, and wrote to Warner at Petersfield, and Dolly at Portchester, to tell them that he would not be home for a while. He did not mention that he was going to Portsmouth to see Hill hanged, and he wanted to get that last horrible scene over before he undertook the pleasant task of re-uniting the two. For, of course, he told himself, it would be a delightful meeting, and how joyful he would feel when he brought Warner from Petersfield to Portchester and set to work to persuade Miss Bramber into receiving at her house the young American.

His noble relative had sent him in reply to his request, a letter for young Warner, in which he

was permitted to remain in England for three months, or to leave the country sooner if he wished to do so. The surgeon sent this document in his letter to the American, who replied, cordially thanking him for it, and saying that he was rapidly getting well.

Upon the 10th of March, Hill was conveyed from Winchester to Portsmouth, and there lodged in a dungeon in the old White House Prison in High Street, replaced early in this century by the Penny Street Gaol, the last named replaced in its turn now by the big gaol at Milton. The old White House then became the Clarence Tavern, and later the Crown Inn, and was still in existence up to quite recent times.

When Brand set out for the Dockyard, he found a great crowd assembled on Portsmouth Common, waiting to see the man hanged, and all in high good-humour, having only one complaint—that such a mild punishment as hanging should have been awarded to one capable of such a crime.

Just inside the entrance to the Yard they had rigged a gallows with the mizzenmast of the *Arethusa*—base use, indeed, for such a spar, as the

master rigger said, who had been ordered to prepare it. When they were getting the mast on end, one of the riggers remarked: "It was strange, but the very day before the rope house was burned, a stranger had said to him that this same spar would make a handy gallows."

Of course, in that hideous manner which was not one of the good old fashions, they brought the poor wretch through the public streets in an open cart. All the way from the White House to the dock gate, a howling, jeering mob surrounded the vehicle, and the soldiers had much difficulty in keeping back the crowd, who once or twice made ugly rushes at the cart, and would, if they could, have anticipated the end.

But Hill, seated between two marines, was quite indifferent to all this, and even paid no attention to the chaplain's exhortations, his eyes continually wandering round in search of one man, and to all appearance he thought of nothing else.

When they entered the Dockyard, and he passed the gallows—the mast rigged with a yard across it, and from the yardarm a whip—Hill caught sight of the word *Arethusa* chalked in big letters on the

mast, and, like the rigger, he remembered that afternoon in the Yard, when people talked of hanging. Then he saw Brand, and standing up in the cart, waved to him.

The grim procession did not stop, but went on to the ruins of the rope house, where all the mateys were assembled, and there, at the request of Hill, the Commissioner came close to the cart.

"Sir," said the prisoner, in a perfectly firm voice, betraying no symptom of fear—"sir, as I am about to die, I acknowledge my crime, and hope God will forgive me for it."

Then casting his eyes upon the crowd, he saw that Brand had accompanied the cart, and much moved, was looking at him.

Outside the Yard gates they were already crying halfpenny sheets of "The last dying speech and confession of Jack the Painter." The cart returning to the dock gate, the chaplain asked Hill if he had anything more to say, and hearing the ballad-mongers' cry, he smiled grimly, answering:

"If you want my speech and confession, you can buy it for a halfpenny on the Hard."

Then he waved once more to Brand, and made

a signal to the Commissioner, who waved his hand. A number of sailors who had been detailed for the purpose walked away with the rope, and the show was over.

Mr. Commissioner Gambier afterwards remarked that the man behaved with great dignity, and when the chaplain reproved him for saying this of a villain who was hanged, the Commissioner replied:

"Sir, allow me to tell you that a man who goes to death decently, without bravado, and at the same time showing as little fear as this man did, does die with dignity, and when my time comes, may I die as bravely."

And Dr. Brand left the scene with the same idea in his mind, thinking, too, upon the scars Hill had shown him, and wondering whether, after all, the cat was not responsible for the spoiling of a brave and good man.

An hour afterwards they cut down the body, and carried it to Gosport, and it was hung in chains on Blockhouse Point. By that time Brand was once more on the road to Petersfield.

He reached the White Hart early in the evening,

and as he entered the inn, full of pleasant anticipations of the meeting, asked cheerily :

"Well, landlord, how is my friend, Mr. Warner? Where is he? No longer in bed, I hope?"

"Oh, good evening, sir; I remember you. Your friend has gone away."

"Gone! When? Where?" exclaimed Brand, astounded.

"That I cannot tell you; but here is a letter which will explain."

"And this," thought the surgeon, as he took the letter—"this is the end of my dream. They could not even wait for me to bring them together."

The letter was carefully sealed, and the doctor's fingers trembled so that he had difficulty in opening the wrapper. Inside he found another sealed letter and a strip of paper, on which this was written :

"For all that you have done for me no words can express my gratitude, but this enclosure more than anything else will, I think, give satisfaction to you. For myself, when this reaches, you I shall have returned to join my countrymen in the

struggle—enemies of yours now, but remember me as a friend among them.”

Brand tore open the sealed envelope—it was a letter addressed to Warner, and it was in Dolly’s handwriting.

“SIR,—You are an honourable gentleman, and will forgive this lack of discretion on my part. But surely a girl whose want of proper caution has brought about so much mischief as I have, will be excused for one more indiscretion in writing these. Dr. Brand has written to me, telling me you are honourably cleared of certain unjust suspicions that were upon you, and that he purposes presently to bring you back to Portchester. Do not come back. If I might presume to think that you have a wish to do so, conquer that desire, for what passed between us must be forgotten; it was but idle nonsense, and nothing that I may have said or done came from my heart, which, even before your coming, although I was too young to understand, was fixed upon another object—upon one which is now so dear to me that I have

no thought for any other living. If you would do me a great kindness, return to America, giving such explanation to Dr. Brand as will relieve his mind upon your sudden departure; but I would not have you hint to him what I have said in this, and be sure I should not have put the words on paper but for the need to make it clear to you that you must not return to Portchester.

"Sir, I wish you every happiness, and in the hope that you will comply with my most earnest request, remain your obliged servant,

"DOROTHY BAGSHOTT."

Dolly's handwriting was large and plain, yet Brand looked at the letter for long, but dimly comprehending its meaning; then at last a joyful glimmering of the truth came to his mind, and calling loudly for his horse, he leapt across it and rode off, in desperate haste, upon the road to Portchester. The weary ride of some fifteen miles upon the heavy, muddy road, by the time of his arrival, not long before midnight, left his horse exhausted, but its rider, although he had had neither food nor rest since early morning, felt no need of such comfort,

Straight to the little parsonage rode Brand. Then, in answer to his violent knocking, the parson put his night-capped head out of the window, and demanded what was wanted.

"Open the door at once, my dear sir. It is I—Brand."

"Oh, doctor, I am so glad, although it is very late, you know."

Inside the cottage Miss Bramber, in a wrapper, forgetting even to try to look dignified, went straight to him and shook his hand, unconscious that her frilled night-cap was still upon her head, and its frills were bobbing in unison with the heartiness of her hand-shaking.

"Do you know anything of these letters? Where is Dolly—is she well? Do they mean—Does her letter mean— Have you—?"

The doctor, as he fired the questions out, danced from one foot to the other in his excitement.

"Wait a moment, and I will answer you."

Miss Bramber opened the door of the little parlour, and another figure in a wrapper, but with her hair hanging down to her waist, for no frilled night-cap confined it, was led in, blushing,

by the spinster, who afterwards declared that she never in her life before had so far forgotten herself or the proprieties.

"Arthur Brand has read your letter that we wrote to that rebel, Dolly, and he has come to us to know its meaning. I have brought you here, that you may answer him," said Miss Bramber.

And the parson laughing, added :

"It is half-past twelve, and I will give you, Brand, a quarter of an hour to extract an answer from Dolly ; then I shall turn you out, and you can go over to the castle and get a bed from Stockleigh, who, by the way, has been appointed Governor."

Then Bramber led his sister away, and left the two together.

The doctor stepped across the room to Dolly, who shyly put her hand in his. A few whispered words between them, and a new chapter in their lives opened—a chapter that has no ending in their written story.

Bramber presently came and insisted that everyone should say good-night, and sleep if they could.

Brand left for his old quarters at the castle, when, after a greeting from Stockleigh and a few minutes' chat over his adventures, he was left alone. Then he went straight to his writing-case and wrote to his noble brother-in-law these lines :

“MY LORD,—Will you allow me to change my mind? If you will give me that appointment to Haslar, I will gladly take it.”

Years afterwards, when Americans were no longer Colonials, but had set up in business for themselves, there came on a visit to Dr. Brand and his wife; at their house near Haslar Hospital, an American lady and gentleman, named Mr. and Mrs. Henry Warner. The American lady was greatly entertained with the story of what became of Jack the Painter's bones, which long had hung in chains on Blockhouse Point—a constant and unpleasant remembrance to Dr. Brand, who could see the gibbet from Haslar windows.

At the request of Mr. Warner, Dr. Brand told the story to the lady, winding up his narrative in these words ;

"Your husband, madam, has no doubt told you most of this long ago, and I presume has explained that the poor wretch thought posterity would remember him as a man who died a great American patriot.

"Americans disown him and his acts, while hereabout he is remembered only by this circumstance: Two sailors, a few years since, climbed the gibbet, that can be seen from here. They stole the remains, taking them in a bag to a low tavern in Gosport, there leaving them in pledge for drink. This gave rise to the song now sung about the streets of Portsmouth town :

"Whose corpse, by ponderous iron rung,
High upon Blockhouse beach was hung,
And long to every tempest swung?
Why truly, Jack the Painter.

"Whose bones, some years since taken down,
Were brought in curious bag to town ;
And left in pledge for half-a-crown?
Why truly, Jack the Painter."

THE END





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